

# Importance of hypothyroidism and diagnosis.

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## Introduction

Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) is a condition in which the thyroid gland does not produce enough of certain important hormones. Hypothyroidism may not cause noticeable symptoms in the early stages. Over time, untreated hypothyroidism can cause a variety of health problems, including obesity, joint pain, infertility, and heart disease. Accurate thyroid function tests are available to diagnose hypothyroidism. Synthetic thyroid hormone therapy is usually easy, safe, and effective once you and your doctor find the right dose for you.

## Symptoms of Hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism has many symptoms that can vary from person to person. Some common symptoms of hypothyroidism are:

- Malaise
- Weight gain
- Difficult to withstand the cold
- Joint and muscle pain
- Dry skin or dry thinning hair
- Heavy or irregular menstrual periods or infertility problems
- Slow heartbeat
- Depression
- Memory impairment
- Goiter (goiter)

## Causes of Hypothyroidism

The most common cause of hypothyroidism is Hashimoto's thyroiditis. "Thyroiditis" is inflammation of the thyroid gland. Hashimoto's thyroiditis is an autoimmune disease. With Hashimoto, your body produces antibodies that attack and destroy the thyroid gland. Thyroiditis can also be caused by a viral infection.

**Autoimmune Disease:** The most common cause of hypothyroidism is an auto immune disorder known as Hashimoto's thyroiditis. Autoimmune disorders occur when the immune system produces antibodies that attack your tissues. This process can affect the thyroid gland.

## Other Causes of Hypothyroidism

**Radiation therapy for the neck area:** Radiation to the neck is needed to treat certain types of cancer, such as lymphoma. Radiation damages the cells of the thyroid gland. This makes it difficult for the glands to produce hormones.

**Treatment with radioactive iodine:** This treatment is often prescribed to people with hyperthyroidism, a condition known as hyperthyroidism. However, radiation destroys cells in the thyroid gland. This usually leads to hypothyroidism.

## Diagnosis of Hypothyroidism

Diagnosis of hypothyroidism can be difficult in practice because symptoms are easily mistaken for other disorders. Talk to your doctor if you have symptoms of hypothyroidism. The main method of diagnosing hypothyroidism is a blood test called the Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone (TSH) test. Your doctor may also order a blood test for a condition like Hashimoto's disease. If your thyroid gland is enlarged, your doctor may be able to feel it during your examination.

## Treatment

Treatment of hypothyroidism is a drug to replace hormones that the thyroid gland can no longer produce. There is a blood test to check your thyroid hormone levels about 6-8 weeks after you start taking the drug. Your doctor will adjust the dose as needed. A separate blood test will be done each time the dose is adjusted. Once you have found the right dose, you may have a blood test within 6 months. After that, an annual test is required. If you take the medicine as directed, you should usually be able to control hypothyroidism. You should never stop taking your medicine without talking with your health care provider first.

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