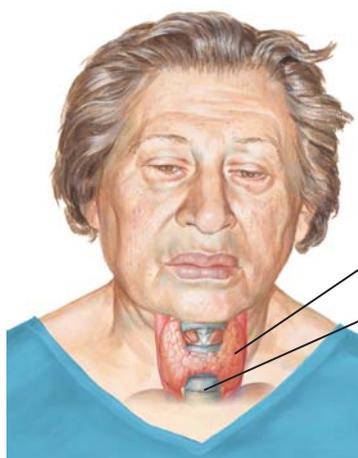
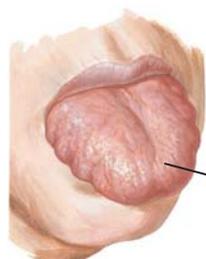


# MANAGING YOUR HYPOTHYROIDISM



When the thyroid does not make enough hormone, it is called hypothyroidism.



Symptoms may include tiredness, coldness, constipation, swollen face and eyelids, and changes in voice and hair texture.

Enlarged tongue and dark rough patches of skin are signs of severe hypothyroidism.

F. Netter M.D.



Thyroid hormone levels can be measured in blood.



## What Is Hypothyroidism?

Hypothyroidism is a disorder of the thyroid gland, which is an endocrine gland in your neck located just below the Adam's apple. The thyroid produces hormones (thyroxine or  $T_4$  and triiodothyronine or  $T_3$ ). These hormones affect how the body works (e.g., control metabolism). In hypothyroidism, the gland doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Hypothyroidism affects both sexes. It can occur at any age but is more common in adult women. Once a person has developed hypothyroidism, the condition is usually permanent.

## What Causes Hypothyroidism?

Hypothyroidism is usually caused when the body makes antibodies (proteins that are part of the immune system) against its own thyroid gland. This form is called an autoimmune disease. It can also occur after treatment for hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid) and as a side effect of some medicines.

## What Are the Symptoms of Hypothyroidism?

Mild hypothyroidism may not cause symptoms. One person will probably not have all the symptoms but may have several of the following ones.

Poor appetite and difficulty with bowel movements (constipation) may lead to gaining or losing weight. Anemia may develop. Becoming pale, feeling cold and unable to sweat, and often feeling tired are possible.

Problems with mental abilities may include poor memory and feeling depressed. Trouble sleeping at night and numbness and tingling in hands and feet may occur.

Hair may become coarse, thin, or grow slowly. The voice may get deeper and hoarse. Some people may feel the effects in other parts of the body. They may have shortness of breath and changes in heart rate. Fluid may be retained, especially around the eyes. Women may have problems with periods. Both men and women may have less interest in sex. In severe hypothyroidism, the tongue may become enlarged (macroglossia) and the skin may look darkened and rough (hyperkeratosis).

## How Is Hypothyroidism Diagnosed?

The doctor will do a complete physical examination and measure levels of thyroid hormones in the blood.

## MANAGING YOUR HYPOTHYROIDISM

In hypothyroidism treatment, synthetic thyroid hormone (levothyroxine) substitutes for the natural hormone.



Don't stop taking your hormone medication unless your doctor says it is OK.



Keep active and watch your weight.



See your doctor regularly to monitor hormone levels.

### How Is Hypothyroidism Treated?

Medicine can replace hormones that your body doesn't make. It is inexpensive, very effective, and available in many doses to properly treat each patient. The goal is to provide the body with enough hormone so that it works normally.

The medicine, called synthetic thyroid hormone or levothyroxine, should be taken daily because the body needs a new supply each day. Regular blood tests will ensure the right dose. The right dose of the synthetic hormone has no side effects. Doses that are too high may cause palpitations, nervousness, shakiness, bone loss, and increased bowel movements. These symptoms should prompt blood tests to check whether the dose should be changed.

Patients should start feeling better within a few weeks after starting thyroid medicine.

### DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Hypothyroidism:

- ✓ **DO** follow your doctor's advice.
- ✓ **DO** see your doctor regularly to check hormone levels.
- ✓ **DO** contact your doctor if your condition changes or new problems develop.
- ✓ **DO** let your doctor know if you become pregnant or want to get pregnant.
- ✓ **DO** keep your weight within normal limits.
- ✓ **DO** stay as active as possible.
  
- ⊘ **DON'T** stop taking your medicine because you feel better, unless your doctor says it's ok. Hypothyroidism usually needs lifelong treatment.

### FROM THE DESK OF

#### NOTES

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### Contact the following sources:

- American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists  
Tel: (904) 353-7878  
**Website:** <http://www.aace.com>
- Thyroid Foundation of America  
Tel: (800) 832-8321  
**Website:** <http://www.allthyroid.org>