

Hypothyroidism

What is hypothyroidism?

Hypothyroidism happens when the thyroid gland does not make enough thyroid hormone. Having too little of this hormone causes many symptoms. If you have any of these symptoms, tell your health care provider.

You may:

- Feel tired all the time.
- Have weak muscles.
- Be constipated.
- Gain weight.
- Have heavy or long monthly periods.

You may have other problems:

- You feel cold a lot of the time.
- Your hair may be coarse, dry, or gray at a young age.
- Your skin may become thick and dry, or your face or tongue may thicken.
- Your eyelids may be swollen.
- Your voice may deepen or grow hoarse.

Still other problems include:

- Slowed heart rate.
- Depression.
- Loss of interest in sex.
- Loss of hearing.
- Numb and tingling hands.

When this disease is not treated, these problems can happen:

- Not being able to keep a normal body temperature.
- Swelling of the thyroid gland (which is called a goiter).
- Mental problems, such as depression.
- Trouble breathing.
- Loss of consciousness or even a coma.

How does it happen?

Hypothyroidism most often happens:

- If you have a disease that causes your thyroid gland to swell.
- If your thyroid gland has been exposed to radiation treatment.

Often it is not known why your thyroid gland is not producing enough thyroid hormone.

How do I know if I have hypothyroidism?

You will have blood tests to measure the thyroid hormones your body makes.

How is it treated?

Your health care provider will prescribe thyroid hormone medicine. This will take the place of what your body would normally make.

- After you take the hormone tablets for about a week, you will feel better.
- You will have another blood test to make sure you are taking enough hormone.
- After a few weeks, you should have no signs of the disease.
- Most likely, you will need to take your tablets every day for the rest of your life.

Taking your hormone tablets is a safe, simple, and inexpensive way to keep healthy. It's important to:

- Take your tablets every day, exactly as prescribed by your health care provider.
- Follow your provider's instructions for getting your thyroid hormone level checked regularly.
- Keep your follow-up appointments.
- See your health care provider if your symptoms come back or are getting worse.

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