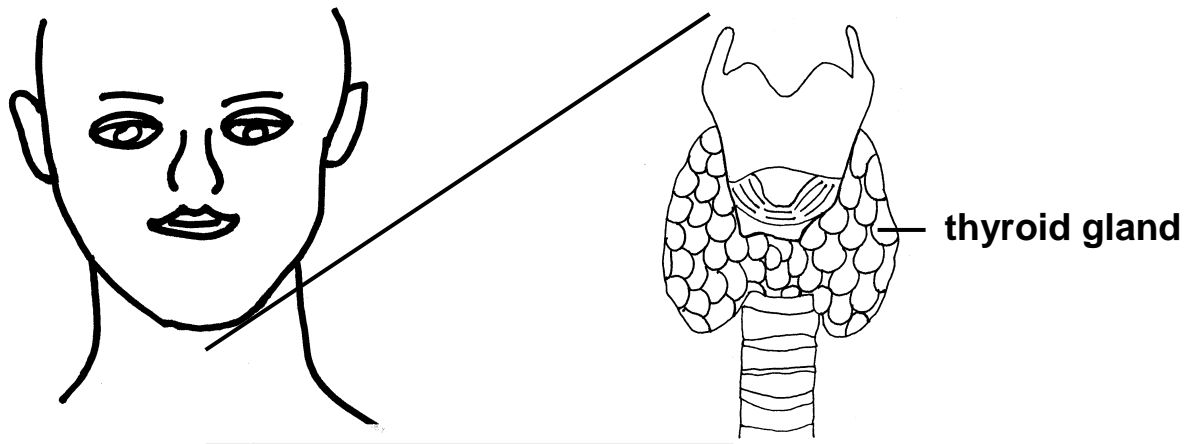


Hypothyroidism

What is the thyroid gland?

The thyroid is a small gland at the base of your neck. It makes thyroid hormones needed for normal growth and body functions.



What is hypothyroidism?

Hypo means low. Hypothyroidism means that the thyroid gland does not make enough hormones called T3 and T4. Thyroid disease is common. About 2 people in 100 have a problem with their thyroid gland.

What causes hypothyroidism?

There are many causes of this problem. You can talk to your doctor or health care provider about what caused your problem.

What are the signs?

Some signs of hypothyroidism are:

- weak, slow heart beat
- sensitive to cold
- muscle weakness
- poor appetite
- poor memory
- slow reflexes
- feeling tired most of the time
- dry, thick, puffy skin
- brittle hair
- hoarse voice
- constipation
- low mood

How does my doctor or health care provider know I have hypothyroidism?

Your doctor or health care provider will do a physical exam. He or she will check your neck and feel the thyroid gland. Your doctor or health care provider will order a blood test. Low levels of T3 and T4 or high levels of TSH mean that you have hypothyroidism.

What is the treatment?

Treatment depends on the cause.

Most people take a pill called a thyroid replacement medication each day for the rest of their life. The amount you take depends on the amount of replacement you need. Your doctor or health care provider will take blood tests regularly until the dose is correct. Then you should have your blood tested once a year to check your levels.

If you become pregnant, your blood should be checked right away and the dose of medication adjusted as needed.

You should not stop taking this medication unless your doctor or health care provider tells you to. Under times of stress or a major illness your dose may need to be adjusted.

When should I contact my doctor or health care provider?

Contact your doctor or health care provider if you feel your condition has changed.

For more information:

For more information contact the Thyroid Foundation of Canada:

National Office: Box 9, Manotick, ON K4M 1A2

Telephone: 1-800-267-8822

Website: www.thyroid.ca