

HYPOTHYROIDISM

What is hypothyroidism (under functioning of thyroid)?

Hypothyroidism means that your thyroid gland can't make enough thyroid hormone which is otherwise required for normal functioning of your body.

What causes hypothyroidism?

Most cases of hypothyroidism are caused by a condition called Hashimoto's thyroiditis, in which a patient's immune system attacks and destroys the thyroid. Iodine deficiency used to be a common cause in India but is not common now a days because of widespread use of iodized salt. Other causes can be treatment of hyperthyroidism, certain medications, and also, it may be present from birth rarely (congenital hypothyroidism).

What are the symptoms of hypothyroidism?

Common complaints include fatigue and lethargy, cold sensitivity, dry skin, impaired concentration and memory, increased weight, puffiness, hoarseness of voice and constipation. In females there can be heavy or delayed menstrual periods. In childhood there may be less height gain or delayed development and puberty. Some patients have a swelling in the front of the neck due to thyroid enlargement (a goitre).

Many patients have relatively few or even none of the classical signs or symptoms just listed.

How is the diagnosis of hypothyroidism made?

Biotin can lead to aberrant results and should be stopped 2 days before doing the tests.

What precautions have to be taken on the day of the test?

To confirm the diagnosis, it is necessary to get laboratory tests that measure thyroid function test (TFT; serum T4 and TSH levels).

Is hypothyroidism a lifelong disorder?

In majority of cases, hypothyroidism is indeed lifelong disorder. However, it may be temporary in a few conditions (eg., ingestion of certain drugs or after thyroiditis)

How is hypothyroidism treated?

Treatment is referred to as 'Replacement' treatment i.e., the deficient thyroid hormone is replaced externally in tablet form with synthetic thyroxine (T4). Thyroxine (T4) is the major hormone produced by the thyroid gland and pure synthetic T4, taken once daily by mouth, successfully treats the symptoms of hypothyroidism in most patients.

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