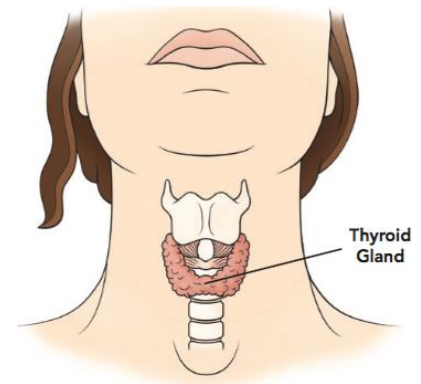


Hashimoto's Disease and Hypothyroidism

What is the Thyroid Gland?

The thyroid gland is found at the front of your neck and makes two thyroid hormones: **thyroxine (T4)** and **triiodothyronine (T3)**. These two hormones control how your body uses and stores energy, also known as your metabolism. The thyroid uses **iodine** in our blood to make thyroid hormones.

The thyroid is controlled by the pituitary gland in your brain. The pituitary makes **thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH)**, which tells the thyroid to make T3 and T4.



Hormone Health Network

What is Hashimoto's Disease and Hypothyroidism?

Hashimoto's disease is an autoimmune condition. This means your immune system is attacking your own thyroid gland. In Hashimoto's disease, this damages the thyroid gland and it is not able to make enough thyroid hormone.

Hypothyroidism is when your thyroid does not produce enough thyroid hormone for your body. It is the most common thyroid condition. Hashimoto's disease is the most common cause of hypothyroidism, but other causes include:

- Radioactive iodine treatment
- Thyroid gland surgery
- Problems with the parathyroid gland (another gland in the neck)
- The thyroid gland is not developed properly

Both conditions are most common in older women and are more likely to be seen in people with a family history of thyroid problems.

Signs and Symptoms

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Tiredness/sluggishness | • Depression |
| • Intolerance to cold | • Difficulty concentrating |
| • Weight gain | • Constipation |
| • Irregular menstrual periods | • Dry skin and/or hair loss |
| • Trouble swallowing | • Large thyroid (goiter) |

How are Hashimoto's Disease and Hypothyroidism diagnosed?

To diagnose Hashimoto's disease and hyperthyroidism, your doctor may do the following:

- Review your symptoms and your personal and family medical histories.
- **Physical Exam** – used to check the size of your thyroid gland.
- **Blood Test** – two tests can be done to check hormone levels.
- **Thyroid Peroxidase (anti-TPO) Antibody Blood Test** – used to check if your immune system is attacking your thyroid gland. This is used to confirm Hashimoto's disease.

How are Hashimoto's Disease and Hypothyroidism treated?

If you have Hashimoto's disease but do not have hypothyroidism, your doctor may recommend regular doctors' visits rather than treating it with medications.

If you have hypothyroidism, your doctor will likely give you a thyroid hormone medication called levothyroxine or synthroid. This pill is the same as the T4 your body makes. People with hypothyroidism are often on thyroid hormone medications for the rest of their lives. Thyroid hormone levels may be measured regularly to adjust the dose if needed.



Be sure to talk to your doctor if you have questions about the types of treatments available to you.

Complications of Hashimoto's Disease and Hypothyroidism

If hypothyroidism or Hashimoto's disease is not treated, it can lead to:

- **Goiter:** swelling of the thyroid gland, which can make it difficult to swallow and/or breathe.
- **Heart Problems:** if left untreated, blood cholesterol levels may increase, which increases the risk of heart disease.
- **Mental Health Issues:** depression, lower sexual desire, and slowed mental functioning are more commonly seen in people with untreated hypothyroidism.
- **Myxedema Coma:** this is a rare life-threatening condition that can happen if hypothyroidism is not treated for a long time.
- **Birth Defects:** babies born to women who have untreated hypothyroidism are at a higher risk of being stillborn or premature. They may also have other problems later in life.