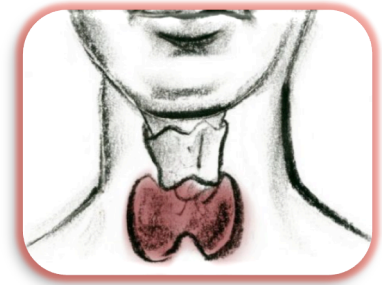


## Thyroid diseases Factsheet No: I



### Hypothyroidism

#### What Is The Thyroid Gland?

The thyroid gland is a butterfly-shaped endocrine gland that is located in the lower front of the neck. The thyroid's job is to make thyroid hormones, which are secreted into the blood and then carried to every tissue in the body. Thyroid hormone helps the body use energy, stay warm and keep the brain, heart, muscles, and other organs functioning properly.

#### What Is Hypothyroidism?

Hypothyroidism means that the thyroid gland can't make enough thyroid hormone to keep the body running normally. People are hypothyroid if they have too little thyroid hormone in the blood.

#### What Are The Symptoms Of Hypothyroidism?

When thyroid hormone levels are too low, the body's processes start slowing down. As the body slows, you feel colder, you tire more easily, your skin gets drier, you become more forgetful and depressed, and often get constipated. Because the symptoms are so variable and non-specific, the only way to know for sure whether you have hypothyroidism is with a simple blood test for TSH and T4.

#### What Does Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone (TSH) Test Tell?

TSH test is the most important and sensitive test for hypothyroidism. It measures how much of the thyroid hormone thyroxine (T4) the thyroid gland is being asked to make. An abnormally high TSH means hypothyroidism: the thyroid gland is being asked to make more T4 because there isn't enough T4 in the blood.

#### What Does The T4 Test Tell?

Most of the T4 in the blood is attached to a protein called thyroxine-binding globulin. The "bound" T4 can't get into body cells. Only about 1%–2% of T4 in the blood is unattached ("free") and can get into cells. The **Free T4** test measures how much unattached T4 is in the blood and available to get into cells.

#### How Is Hypothyroidism Treated?

Hypothyroidism can't be cured, but can be completely controlled. It is treated by replacing the amount of hormone that your own thyroid can no longer make, to bring your T4 and TSH back to normal levels. Synthetic thyroxine pills contain hormone exactly like the T4 that the thyroid gland itself makes.

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