

Hypothyroidism

We were unable to identify an authoritative, non-copyrighted article on hypothyroidism. However, an excellent article prepared by A.D.A.M., Inc. for the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health is available for free on-line viewing at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000353.htm>.

To obtain a free copy of the present document, go to www.masterdocs.com.

Hypothyroidism (myxedema) occurs when the thyroid gland does not produce sufficient thyroid hormone.

The most common cause is Hashimoto's thyroiditis (an autoimmune disease). Other causes are excess treatment for hyperthyroidism (e.g., removing too much of the gland at surgery, or giving too much radioiodine), other inflammatory diseases of the thyroid, congenital defects or reduced TSH hormone from the pituitary gland. In some parts of the world, hypothyroidism can result from insufficient iodine in the diet.

The diagnosis of hypothyroidism can be easy to miss unless the physician is alert to the possibility of the disease. This is particularly so in the elderly, in whom hypothyroidism can be an important, treatable cause of mental depression.

Early symptoms may include:

- weakness and fatigue
- cold intolerance
- constipation
- weight gain
- mental depression
- joint or muscle pain
- thin, brittle fingernails or hair
- pale skin

Treatment

Treatment consists of supplementing the reduced circulating thyroid hormone levels by giving thyroid hormone by mouth.

The following information relates to the article on hypothyroidism at the above website:

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Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA. Review provided by VeriMed Healthcare Network.

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