

## Hypothyroidism in Children

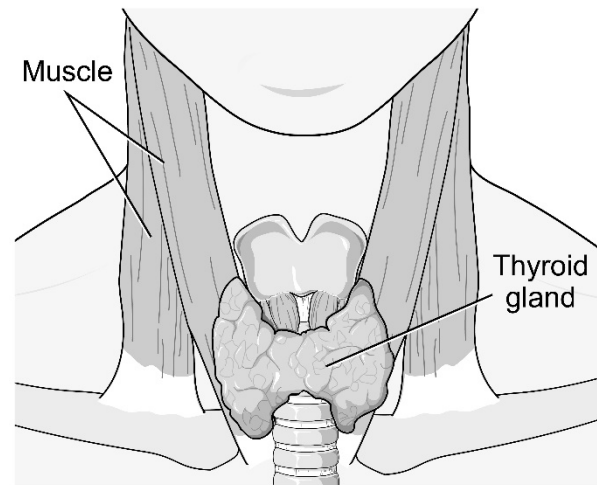
You/your child has been diagnosed with hypothyroidism. This occurs when the thyroid gland, one of the body's endocrine glands, does not make enough thyroid hormone. Thyroid hormone affects weight gain and growth, body temperature, the heartbeat, and brain development. This handout will answer questions you may have about the condition and how it is treated.

### Keywords

- **Gland** – A special group of cells in the body that produce and release a hormone.
- **Hormone** – A chemical messenger sent out from a gland into the bloodstream where it can carry its message to other cells in the body.
- **Euthyroid** – “Eu” means “normal.” Euthyroid means the level of thyroid hormone is normal.
- **Hypothyroid** – “Hypo” means “too little, not enough.” Hypothyroid means there is not enough thyroid hormone.

### The Thyroid Gland

The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland in the center front of the neck. A healthy thyroid sends out thyroid hormone (called thyroxine or T4). When the thyroid gland gets a message from the brain (thyroid stimulating hormone or TSH) that the body needs thyroid hormone, the thyroid gland sends them into the bloodstream. The blood then carries thyroid hormone all over the body.



### Symptoms

- Swelling in the front of the neck called a goiter
- Feeling cold all the time
- Feeling tired or sleepy during the day
- Constipation
- Slow growth
- Rough or brittle hair
- Mild weight gain (but does not often cause obesity)
- Puffiness in face, hands, and feet

### Treatment

Hypothyroidism is treated with a thyroid hormone pill. Take this pill at the same time **every day** as part of your daily routine so you don't forget to take it. To help it absorb, avoid taking the pill with calcium or iron.

A growing child will need different doses of thyroid hormone as they grow. Blood tests are needed every 3-6 months to see if the current dosage is correct or if it needs to be changed.

Symptoms will go away with treatment, but it is still very important to keep taking the medicine. Without the pills, the symptoms will return.

### **Clinic Visits**

The doctor or nurse will look at the thyroid in several ways during clinic visits.

- Physical exam:
  - Feel the thyroid gland
  - Measure heart rate, blood pressure, height, and weight
  - Check reflexes
- Check skin and hair

### **Who to Call**

Pediatric Endocrinology  
**(608) 263-6420**

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7141