

# Hypothyroidism (Low Thyroid Level): Brief Version

## What is hypothyroidism?

You have hypothyroidism when the thyroid gland does not make enough thyroid hormone. (The thyroid gland is in the front of your neck.) Having too little thyroid hormone causes many symptoms. If you have any of these symptoms, tell your healthcare provider.

You may:

- Feel tired all the time
- Have weak muscles
- Be constipated
- Gain weight
- Have heavy or long menstrual periods

You may have other symptoms:

- You feel cold a lot of the time.
- Your hair may become coarse or dry, or it may turn gray at a young age.
- Your skin may get thick and dry
- Your tongue may get thick.
- Your eyelids may be swollen.
- Your voice may deepen or grow hoarse.

You may also have:

- Slowed heart rate
- Depression
- Loss of interest in sex
- Loss of hearing

When this disease is not treated, you can have:

- Swelling of the thyroid gland (which is called a goiter)
- Loss of consciousness or even a coma
- Heart failure

## How does it happen?

Hypothyroidism most often happens to women over age 40, but it can happen to anyone at any time. For example, it may happen if:

- You have a disease, often a virus, that causes your thyroid gland to swell.
- Your brain isn't signaling your thyroid to make enough hormone.
- Your thyroid gland has been exposed to radiation during cancer treatment.

Often it is not known why the thyroid gland is not producing enough thyroid hormone.

## **How is it treated?**

Your healthcare provider will prescribe thyroid hormone medicine. This will take the place of the thyroid hormone your body is not making.

- After you take the hormone pills for about a week, you will feel better.
- You will have another blood test to make sure you are taking enough hormone.
- After a few weeks, you should have no symptoms of the disease.
- You will likely need to take your pills every day for the rest of your life.
- As your body and your activity level change with time, the amount of medicine you need can change, too. You will need to have blood tests to check your thyroid hormone level every few months for the rest of your life. The tests can help make sure you are getting the right amount of medicine.

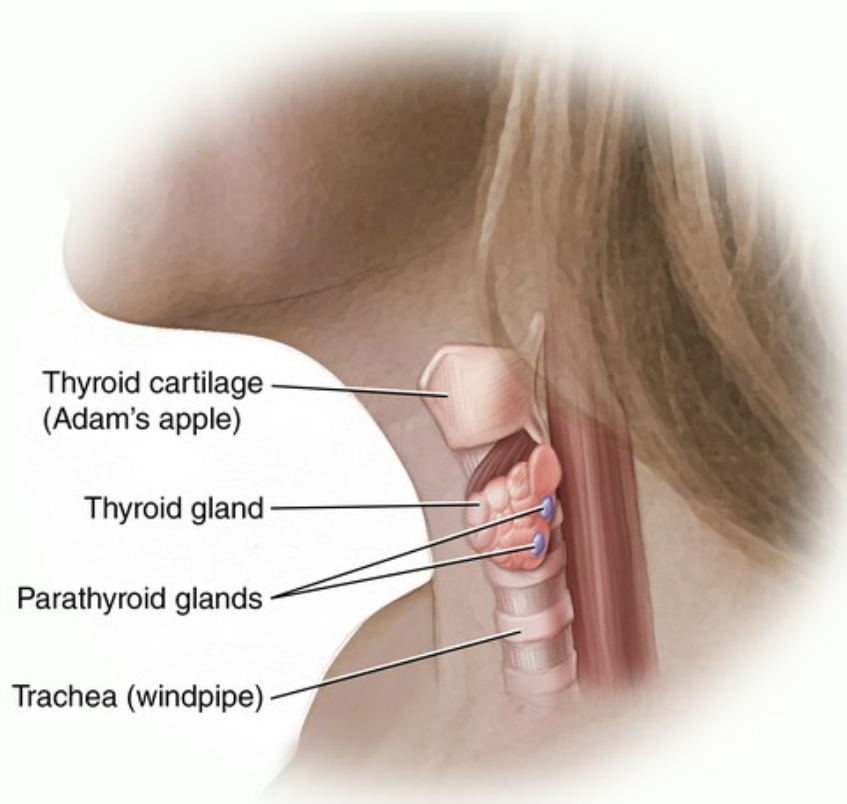
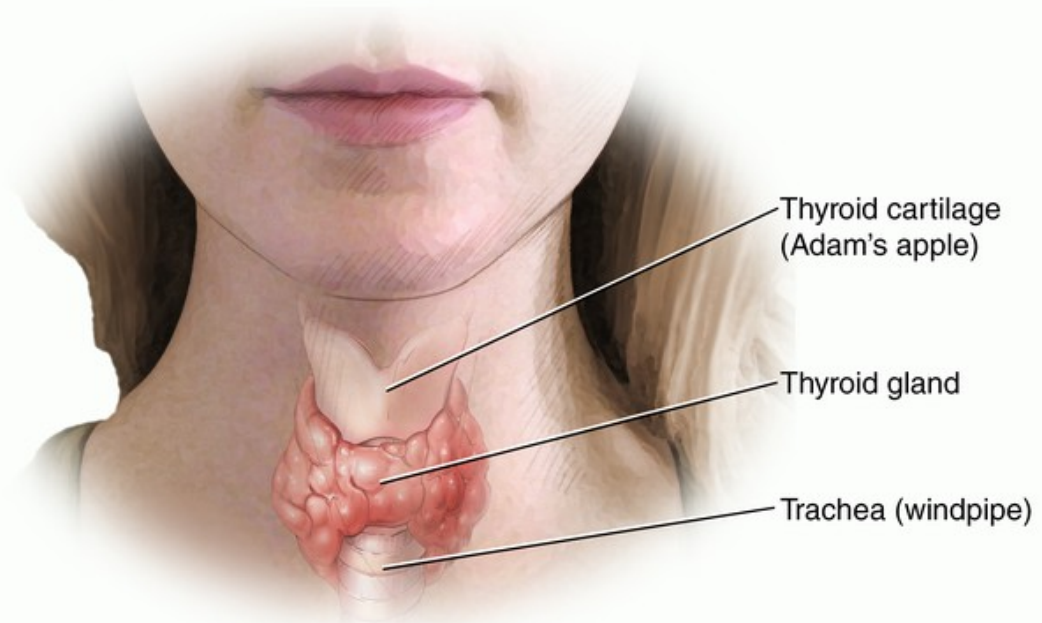
Taking your hormone pills is a safe, simple, and inexpensive way to stay healthy. It's important to:

- Take your pills every day, exactly as prescribed by your healthcare provider. Don't stop when you feel better or you will soon be sick again.
- Follow your provider's instructions for getting your thyroid hormone level checked regularly.
- Keep your follow-up appointments.
- See your healthcare provider if:
  - Any of your symptoms are not getting better or they come back.
  - You have new symptoms.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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# Thyroid and Parathyroid Glands



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