

# Sukhi Lalli

## What is a Thyroid and What Does it Do?

The thyroid is a butterfly shaped gland which wraps around the front part of the windpipe just below the Adam's apple. It produces hormones that regulate the body's metabolism and organ function. Thyroid hormone influences essentially every organ, every tissue and every cell in the body.

## What is Hypothyroidism?

Hypothyroidism means too little thyroid hormone and is a common problem. In fact, hypothyroidism is often present for a number of years before it is recognized and treated. Hypothyroidism can even be associated with pregnancy. Treatment for all types of hypothyroidism is usually straightforward.

## What are the Signs and Symptoms of Hypothyroidism?

In general, the symptoms of hypothyroidism are:

- Weight gain
- Puffy face
- Loss or thinning of eyebrows
- Cold intolerance
- Low sex drive
- Depression
- Abdominal bloating
- Cold hands or feet
- Dry or thinning hair
- Joint or muscle pain
- Thickening of the skin
- Thin, brittle fingernails

## How is Hypothyroidism Treated?

Hypothyroidism is traditionally treated with thyroid hormone replacement therapy (either synthetic or natural). Thyroid replacement therapy could include taking levothyroxine (T4), liothyronine (T3), or a combination product that contains both T4 and T3. All of these treatments work in the body like thyroxine, the human hormone that is normally produced by the thyroid gland, and subsequently converted to T3, the active hormone.

## Things to Remember:

- Within a few weeks of beginning therapy your symptoms should subside. Don't stop taking your medication because you feel better.
- Talk with your doctor and pharmacist about how you are reacting to treatment.
- Tell your doctor if you are, or may be, pregnant.
- Tell your doctor if you are taking any other medications.

This material is intended for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for the medical advice of your doctor or any other health care professional. Always consult with your physician if you are in any way concerned about your health.

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