



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Thyroiditis is a group of inflammatory thyroid disorders. The thyroid gland is a hormone-producing organ at the base of the neck, next to the trachea (windpipe). The disorders often affect women between ages 30 and 50. Types include:

- Chronic lymphocytic thyroiditis (Hashimoto's thyroiditis or autoimmune thyroiditis) is the most common type.
- Subacute granulomatous thyroiditis (DeQuervain's thyroiditis). It is less common.
- Subacute lymphocytic thyroiditis (silent thyroiditis or postpartum thyroiditis). It occurs more often in women who have recently delivered a baby.
- Acute suppurative thyroiditis (rarer type).

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- No symptoms may occur or they may be very mild.
- Enlarged thyroid gland (goiter).
- May have trouble swallowing.
- Pain or tenderness in the thyroid (sometimes).
- Fever (sometimes).
- Underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism). It may cause fatigue, weight gain, and trouble concentrating.
- Overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism). It is less common, and may cause weight loss and sleep problems.

CAUSES

Thyroiditis can be brought on by a number of different factors. In the most common type, it is an immune system problem, but why this occurs is unknown. Other factors include viral or bacterial infections.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Disorder of the body's immune system.
- Pregnancy.
- Family history of thyroid disease.
- Previous thyroid disorders.
- Various viruses, such as mumps or influenza.
- Bacterial infection of the thyroid gland (rare).

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

No specific preventive measures.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Will depend on the type. The chronic type can be treated successfully with thyroid hormone therapy. It may take several weeks of therapy for symptoms to improve. Other types of thyroiditis may clear up on their own in 4 to 6 months.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Permanent loss of thyroid function. This requires life-long thyroid hormone replacement.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will usually do a physical exam and ask about your symptoms. Medical tests include blood studies to check your thyroid function. Other tests may be done to confirm the diagnosis.
- Treatment, if needed, is with drugs, and will depend on the type of thyroiditis.
- If symptoms are not severe, treatment may involve watchful waiting. This means monitoring thyroid function for a few months before deciding on treatment.
- Very rarely, thyroid surgery may be an option if other treatment does not improve painful symptoms.
- With any type of thyroiditis, it is important to follow up with your health care provider for periodic exams.
- To learn more: American Thyroid Association, 6066 Leesburg Pike, Suite 650, Falls Church, VA 22041; (800) 849-7643; website: www.thyroid.org or Thyroid Foundation of America, 410 Stuart St., Boston, MA. 02116; (800) 832-8321; website: www.tsh.org.

MEDICATIONS

- Antithyroid drugs or thyroid replacement hormones, depending on the activity of your thyroid hormones.
- Beta-adrenergic blockers to suppress symptoms of an overactive thyroid may be prescribed.
- Antibiotics to fight infection, if needed.
- Cortisone drugs to decrease inflammation may rarely be prescribed.
- You may use aspirin (not for children) or ibuprofen to control mild pain.

ACTIVITY

No limits.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of thyroiditis.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page