Autoimmune polyendocrine syndrome type II, also known as Schmidt syndrome, is a rare autoimmune disorder in which there is a steep drop in production of several essential hormones by the glands that secrete these hormones. When first described, this disorder was thought to involve only adrenal insufficiency (Addison's disease) and thyroid insufficiency (Hashimoto's thyroiditis). However, over time, as more patients were studied, the scope of the disorder was expanded to include disorders of other underperforming endocrine glands. These include the gonads, which secrete sex hormones; the pancreas which secretes insulin and is intimately tied up with diabetes mellitus; and sometimes the parathyroid glands. Failure of the endocrine glands to function is usually accompanied by signs of malnutrition because the ability of the intestinal tract to absorb nutrients is reduced dramatically. Since the combination of affected glands differs from patient to patient, the signs of this disorder are diverse. The exact cause of AIPS-II is not known, but it is thought to result from one or more abnormal immune responses. Autoimmune reactions occur when, for reasons not quite clear, the body mistakenly reacts to a normal antibody as if it were a foreign one. Report suggest that the prevalence of AIPS-II is about 14 to 20 cases per million of population and that it affects females 3 to 4 times as often as it does males. AIPS-II usually strikes in the third or fourth decade of life. Each disorder in a case of autoimmune polyendocrine type II is treated separately. For many of the specific disorders, treatment is focused on hormone replacement therapy.