

Discharge Instructions for Hypothyroidism and Myxedema



You have hypothyroidism. Your thyroid gland is not making enough thyroid hormone to meet your body's needs. Hypothyroidism slows your body's normal rate of functioning. This causes mental and physical sluggishness. Symptoms may range from mild to severe. The most severe form is called myxedema coma. This is a medical emergency.

Medicine

Take your thyroid hormone medicine exactly as directed. You will take this medicine for the rest of your life.

- Take your medicine at the same time each day.
- Keep your pills in a container that is labeled with the days of the week. This will help you know if you've taken your medicine each day.
- Take your medicine with a full glass of water on an empty stomach. Take it at least 30 minutes to 1 hour before you eat breakfast. Or at bedtime, take it at least 3 hours after eating.
- Don't take calcium or iron within 4 hours of taking your thyroid medicine. And ask your healthcare provider about taking other medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements with your thyroid pill.
- Keep taking your medicine if you get pregnant. Many women need more thyroid medicine during pregnancy. Your provider may raise your dose.
- Your provider will regularly check your thyroid hormone levels with blood tests. If your dose is changed, you will often have lab work in 4 to 6 weeks. This is to be sure the new dose is right for you.
- Always tell your providers of any changes in your other medicines. This includes estrogens, testosterone, opioids, heart medicines, and anti-seizure medicines. These changes may affect your thyroid hormone levels.
- Never stop treatment on your own. If you do, your symptoms will come back.

Other home care

- During your routine visits, tell your healthcare provider about any signs of too much thyroid hormone (hyperthyroidism), such as:
 - Restlessness
 - Rapid weight loss
 - Sweating
 - Fast heartbeat (palpitations)
- Eat a high-fiber, low-calorie diet. This can help ease constipation. It can also help you stay at a healthy weight.
- Exercise. Start slow, by walking 5 to 15 minutes each day. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services advises that adults with chronic conditions or disabilities, who are able, should do:
 - At least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) to 300 minutes (5 hours) a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity
 - Or 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) to 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of

vigorous-intensity aerobic activity

- Or an equal mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity. This can be done in 10-minute periods during the day.
- Hypothyroidism is linked to higher cholesterol and a higher risk of heart disease. Correcting this problem generally improves cholesterol levels. Talk with your healthcare provider about a healthy lifestyle.

To learn more

The resources below can help you learn more:

- [American Thyroid Association at www.thyroid.org](http://www.thyroid.org) or 703-998-8890
- [Hormone Health Network at www.hormone.org](http://www.hormone.org) or 800-467-6663

Follow-up care

Follow-up with your healthcare provider, or as advised.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of the following occur:

- Extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- Puffy hands, face, or feet
- Irregular heartbeat
- Confusion
- Rapid weight loss or weight gain

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