

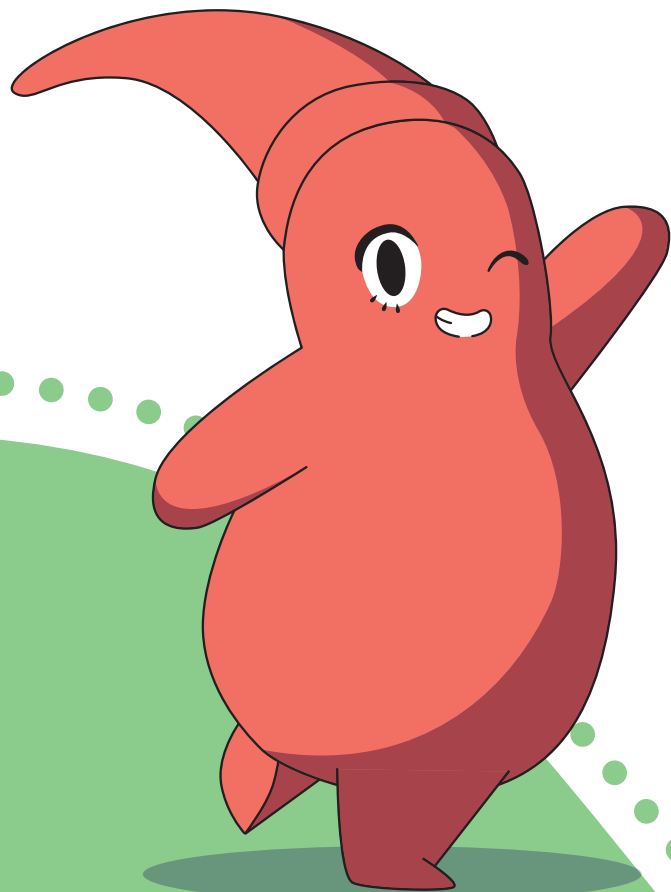


ANZSPED

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND
SOCIETY FOR PAEDIATRIC
ENDOCRINOLOGY AND DIABETES

Want to know more about

Autoimmune Hypothyroidism



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What causes autoimmune hypothyroidism?

Autoimmune hypothyroidism (sometimes also called autoimmune thyroiditis or Hashimoto thyroiditis) is the most common cause of hypothyroidism in children.

An autoimmune process is when the immune system (which normally protects the body from infections) accidentally attacks a normal part of the body.

In autoimmune hypothyroidism, the thyroid gland is the target. The inflammation from the immune attack, and the body's response to try to make more thyroid hormone, can cause the thyroid to increase in size, and this is called a goitre.

How common is autoimmune hypothyroidism?

Autoimmune hypothyroidism is estimated to affect approximately 10-15% of the whole population.



What is a thyroid gland?

The thyroid gland is a small butterfly-shaped gland in the lower part of the neck.

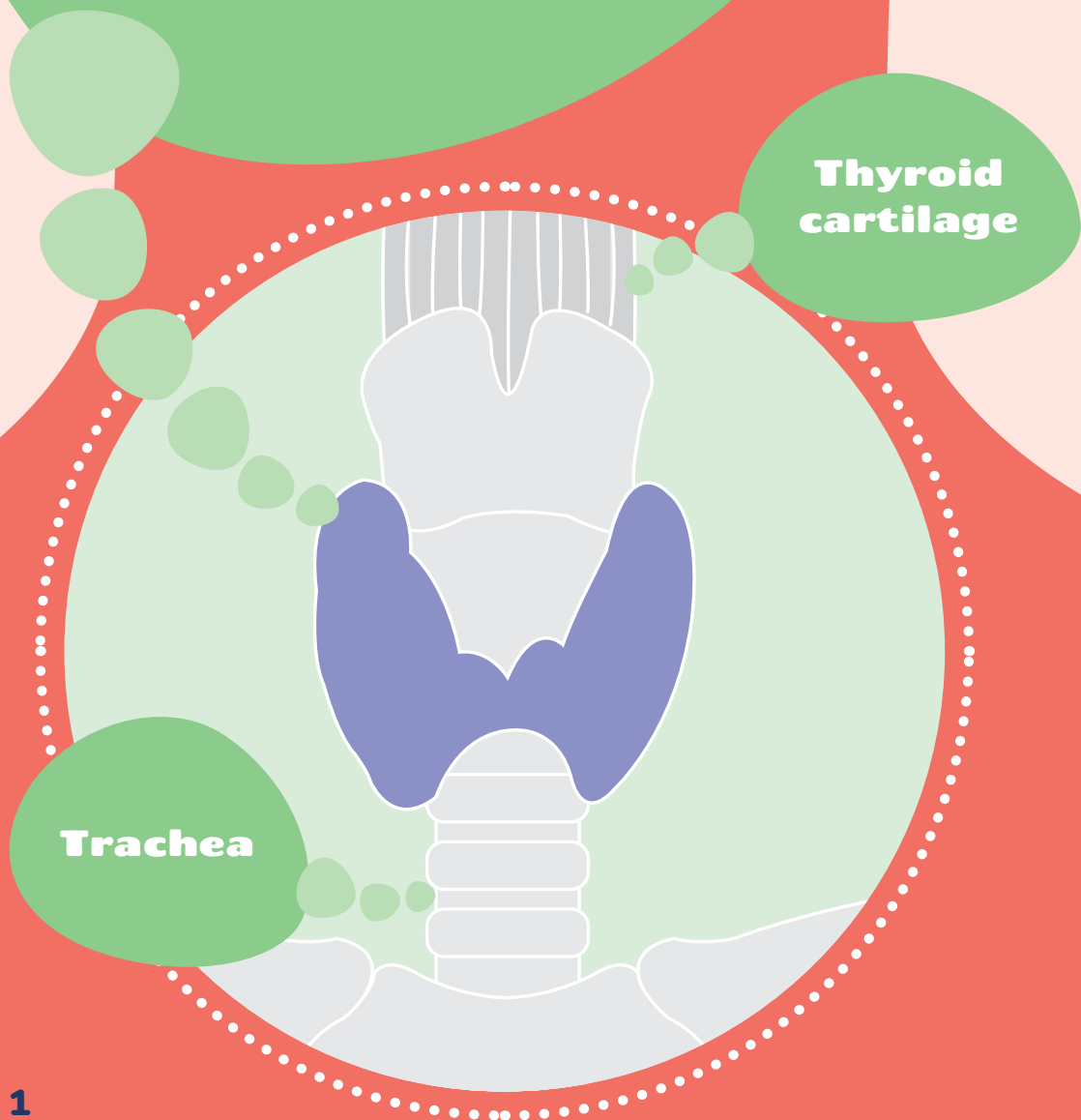
It releases thyroid hormones (chemical messengers) that help regulate vital body functions including; blood pressure, energy levels, body temperature, growth and metabolism, all of which help maintain normal health.

Hypothyroidism occurs when the thyroid gland stops producing enough thyroid hormone.

Thyroid cartilage

Trachea

Figure 1



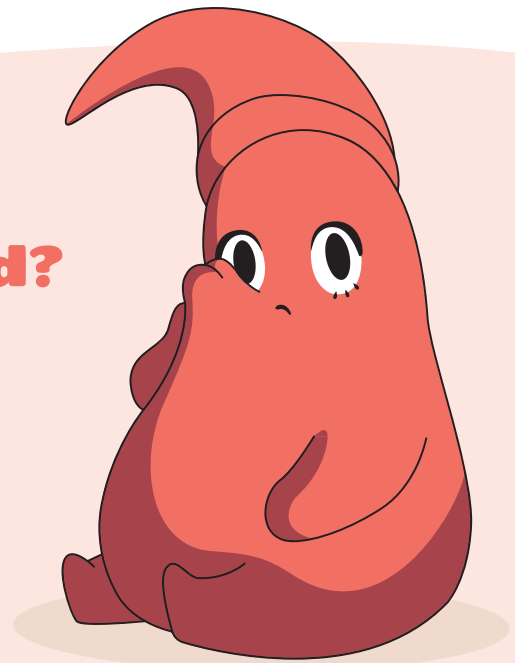
What are the symptoms of autoimmune hypothyroidism?

If the thyroid gland does not produce enough hormone (hypothyroidism), every part of the body 'slows down'. Your child's growth may be slowed, they might gain weight, feel cold, have decreased energy, have poor concentration, dry skin and hair, and constipation.

In older girls, irregular menstrual periods may occur. However, many children only have mild symptoms, if any.

How is it diagnosed?

The diagnosis of autoimmune hypothyroidism is made with a simple blood test measuring thyroid function as well as specific antibodies which attack the thyroid gland.



What treatment is required?

Treatment is with a tablet known as levothyroxine which replaces the thyroid hormone normally made by the body. The tablets need to be taken daily and are small, tasteless and easy to swallow. Treatment may be needed life-long.

What monitoring is required during treatment?

The treatment will need to be monitored with regular blood tests, particularly after starting treatment or after a change in dose of medication.

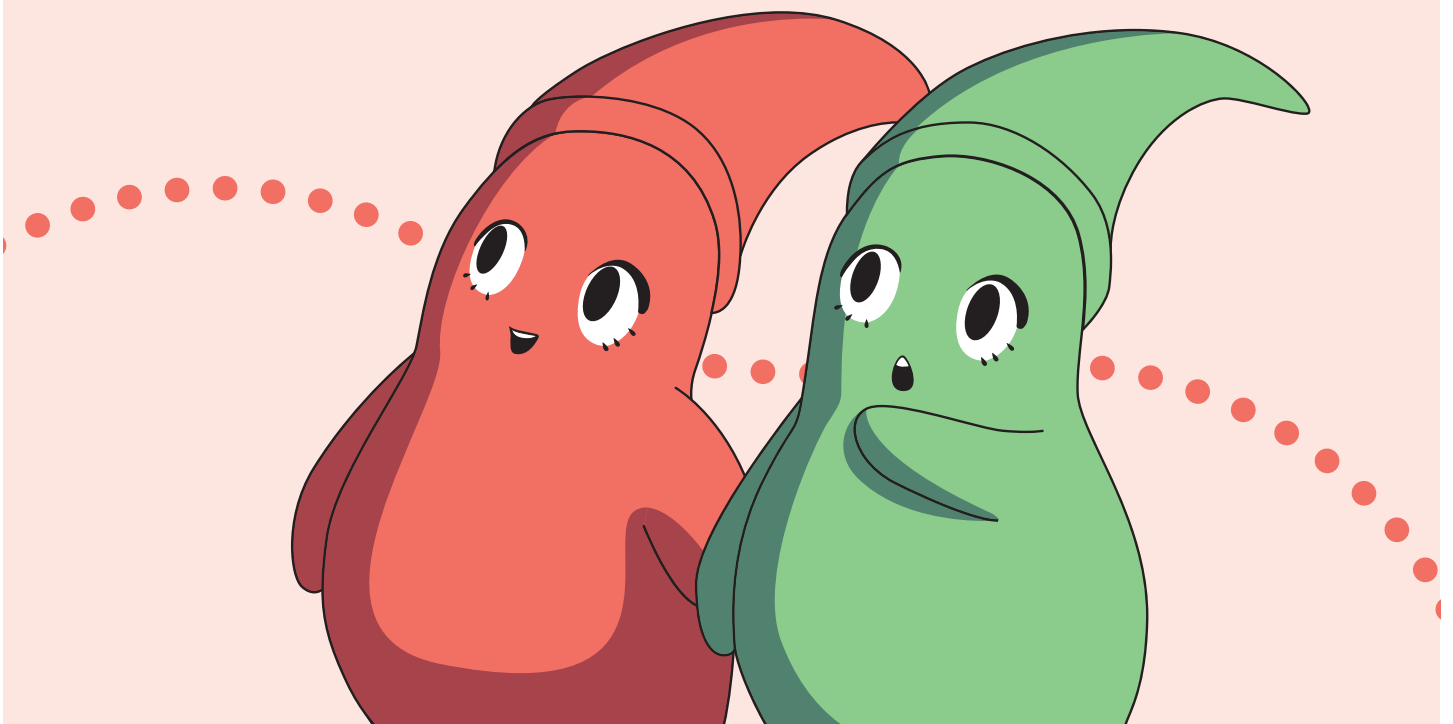
The goal of treatment is to keep the thyroid hormone levels in the normal range.

Does the treatment have side effects?

As the treatment is to replace a hormone normally made by the body, it is very unlikely to have adverse effects unless your child gets too little or too much medication.

Symptoms of not enough medication include slow growth, constipation, weight gain and feeling cold.

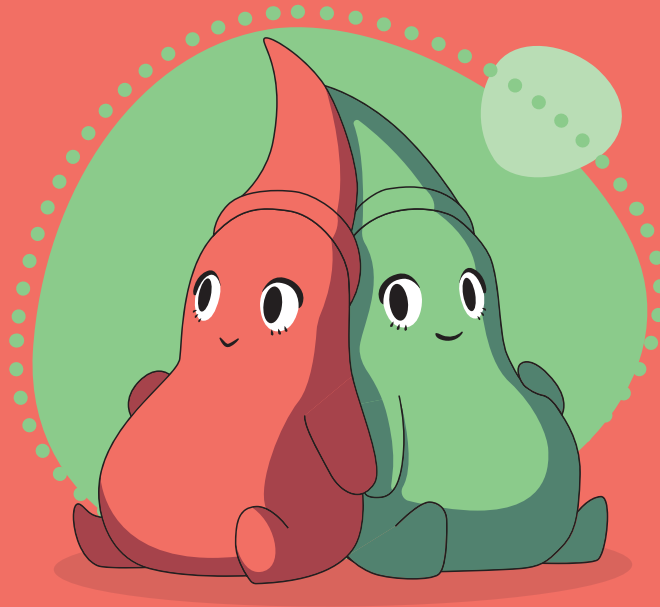
Symptoms of too much medication include diarrhoea, restlessness, poor sleep and/or feeling hot and sweaty.





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Remember

Regular medication is important for your child's growth and development and close review by your child's medical team is essential.



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