

Brief Note on Hashimoto's Disease

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DESCRIPTION

Hashimoto's disease is an autoimmune disease (a disorder in which the immune system turns against the body's tissues). In Hashimoto's disease, the immune system attacks the thyroid gland. Hashimoto's disease may lead to hypothyroidism, which is a condition of the thyroid not being able to make enough hormones for the body's needs.

The thyroid is a small gland at the base of the neck, below your Adam's apple. The thyroid gland is a part of our endocrine system, which produces hormones for coordinating lots of our body's functions.

In Hashimoto's disease, white blood cells and antibodies mistakenly attack the cells of the thyroid. The exact cause of Hashimoto's is not known, but many factors like genes, hormones (sex hormones), excessive iodine, radiation exposure are believed to play a role.

At first, Hashimoto's symptoms may be mild, may take years to develop to be identified. An enlarged thyroid, called a goiter is the first sign of this disease. The front of the neck looks swollen due to the goiter. A large goiter may make swallowing difficult. Other symptoms of an underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism) due to Hashimoto's may include; weight gain, fatigue, paleness or puffiness of the face, joint and muscle pain, constipation, hair loss or thinning, difficulty in pregnancy, hair loss or thinning, irregular or heavy menstrual periods, depression, slowed heart rate.

Hashimoto's disease is more common in women compared to men. It more often develops in women between the age group 25 to 50.

A thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) test is done to diagnose Hashimoto's disease. A high TSH level most commonly means

the thyroid gland is not producing enough T4 hormones; this test is usually most consistent with a diagnosis of hypothyroidism or subclinical hypothyroidism. A free T4 test (Free thyroxine (free T4) tests are used to help evaluate thyroid function and diagnose thyroid diseases, including hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism.) indicates a low T4 level, which suggests that the person has hypothyroidism. The presence of antibodies in a thyroid antibody test indicates a higher risk of developing Hashimoto's hypothyroidism. Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA) is generally done on all thyroid nodules that are big enough to be felt (about 1 centimeter, 1/2 inch). FNA biopsies of swollen or abnormal appearing lymph nodes in the neck may help to diagnose thyroid cancer.

Hashimoto's disease can be treated with medicines that replace lost thyroid hormone. That should stop the symptoms and also ease a goiter. Problems like pain or trouble swallowing, breathing, or speaking can be caused by a goiter. If these symptoms don't get better, need surgery to remove the goiter.

Thyroid hormone therapy may be useful for Hashimoto's disease since all symptoms are shown due to thyroid hormone deficiency. Levothyroxine tablet use in the treatment of hypothyroidism caused by Hashimoto's disease.

Doctors do precisely adjust hormone dosage based on the tests for a particular person since the body is sensitive to even small changes in thyroid hormone levels.

If the dose is lower than it requires, the thyroid gland may continue to enlarge, and symptoms of hypothyroidism will continue. If the dose is stronger than it requires, it can cause hyperthyroidism, which may create strain on the heart and increased the risk of developing osteoporosis.

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Received: 26-Oct-2022, Manuscript No. IDIT-22-19852; **Editor assigned:** 28-Oct-2022, PreQC No: IDIT-22-19852 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 15-Nov-2022, QC No: IDIT-22-19852; **Revised:** 22-Nov-2022, Manuscript No: IDIT-22-19852 (R). **Published:** 29-Nov-2022; 10.35248/2593-8509.22.7.125

Citation: Res DV (2022) Brief Note on Hashimoto's Disease. Immunol Disord Immunothe. 6:1000125.

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