Hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism means your thyroid gland is overactive. It is sometimes called Graves' disease.

CAUSES

The cause of hyperthyroidism is not known but it appears to be inherited in some cases.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of this condition include:

- An enlarged thyroid gland (*goiter*) or toxic nodule.
- Nervousness. Shakiness. Emotional upsets. Difficulty concentrating.
- Hunger. Weight loss. Nausea. Vomiting. Diarrhea.
- Sweating. Fever. Heat sensitivity. Hair loss. Swollen itchy legs.
- Weakness, fatigue, palpitations, rapid pulse, increased blood pressure.
- Menstrual irregularity. Decreased fertility.
- Hyperthyroidism can also cause the eyes to bulge out.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis is confirmed by lab tests for thyroid hormones (T3, T4, TSH) and by thyroid scanning.

TREATMENT

Treatment can include:

- Beta blockers.
- Antithyroid drugs.
- Radioactive iodine.
- Surgery.

This depends on the cause of the disease, the size of the thyroid gland, and the need for surgery. Antithyroid drugs are often prescribed for younger people and pregnant women. They are usually taken for 6 months to two years before treatment is over. One dose of Iodine 131 can be used in other patients. But larger goiters are treated surgically. Patients who are treated for hyperthyroidism may later develop an under active gland. So follow up care is very important.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

Treatment usually results in improvement over 1-2 months.

- Be sure to get plenty of rest.
- Eat a balanced diet. This will help restore any weight loss.
- You should avoid touching the thyroid gland in your neck. This may release increased amounts of thyroid hormone.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have a high fever, or severe headache.
- You are vomiting.
- You develop extreme nervousness.

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