

# Hashimoto's Thyroiditis

## Overview

Hashimoto's disease is an autoimmune disorder affecting the thyroid gland. The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland located at the base of the neck just below the Adam's apple. The thyroid produces hormones that help regulate many functions in the body.

An autoimmune disorder is an illness caused by the immune system attacking healthy tissues. In Hashimoto's disease, immune-system cells lead to the death of the thyroid's hormone-producing cells. The disease usually results in a decline in hormone production (hypothyroidism).

Although anyone can develop Hashimoto's disease, it's most common among middle-aged women. The primary treatment is thyroid hormone replacement.

Hashimoto's disease is also known as Hashimoto's thyroiditis, chronic lymphocytic thyroiditis and chronic autoimmune thyroiditis.

## Thyroid gland

The thyroid gland is located at the base of the neck, just below the Adam's apple.

## Symptoms

Hashimoto's disease progresses slowly over the years. You may not notice signs or symptoms of the disease. Eventually, the decline in thyroid hormone production can result in any of the following:

- Fatigue and sluggishness
- Increased sensitivity to cold
- Increased sleepiness
- Dry skin
- Constipation
- Muscle weakness
- Muscle aches, tenderness and stiffness
- Joint pain and stiffness
- Irregular or excessive menstrual bleeding
- Depression

- Problems with memory or concentration
  - Swelling of the thyroid (goiter)
  - A puffy face
  - Brittle nails
  - Hair loss
  - Enlargement of the tongue
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### **When to see a doctor**

Signs and symptoms of Hashimoto's disease vary widely and are not specific to the disorder. Because these symptoms could result from any number of disorders, it's important to see your health care provider as soon as possible for a timely and accurate diagnosis.