

# **OVERACTIVE THYROID HEALTH CARE LEAFLET**

## **Symptoms**

Overactive thyroid (also known as hyperthyroidism) is a relatively common hormonal condition that occurs when there is too much thyroid hormone in the body.

Excess levels of thyroid hormones can then speed up the body's metabolism, triggering a range of symptoms, such as:

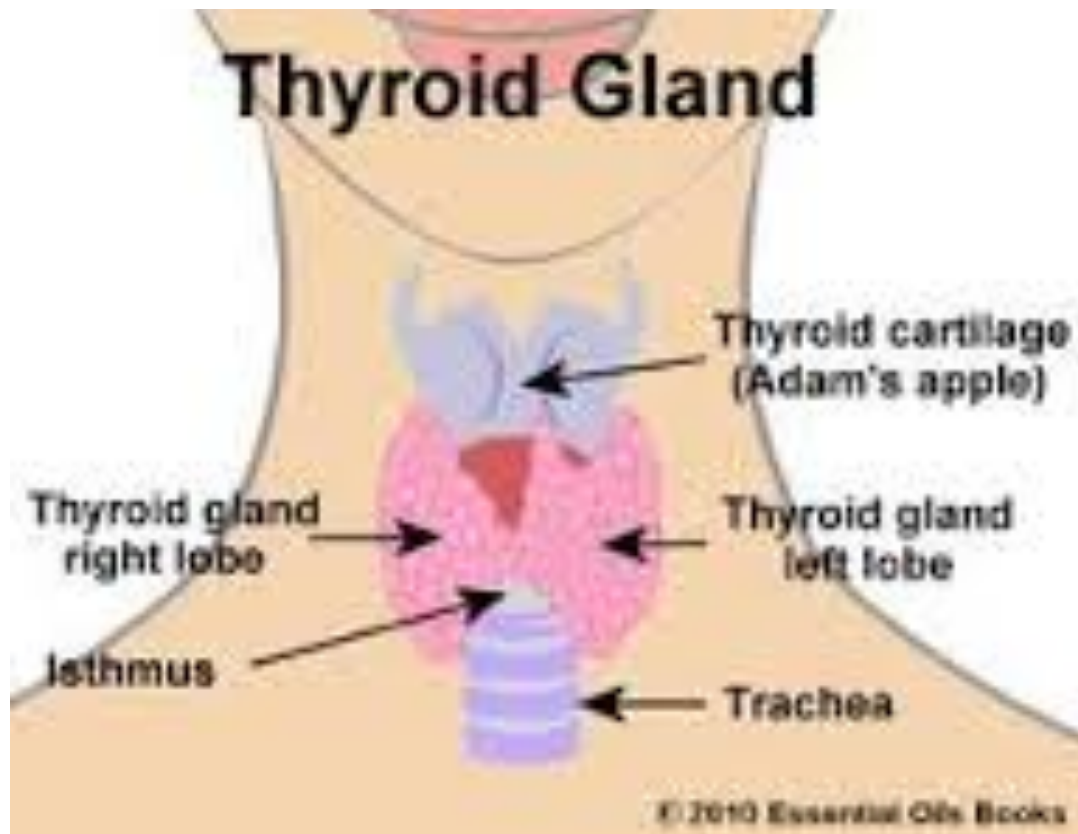
- Nervousness and anxiety
- Hyperactivity – where a person can't stay still and is full of nervous energy
- Unexplained or unplanned weight loss
- Swelling of the thyroid gland, which causes a noticeable lump, known as a goitre, to form in the throat

The severity, frequency and range of symptoms can vary from person to person.

## **Treatment**

An overactive thyroid usually responds well to treatment, and most people are able to control their symptoms. The three most widely used treatments are:

- **Thionamides** – a group of medications, including carbimazole and methimazole, that stop the thyroid gland producing too much thyroid hormone.
- **Radioiodine treatment** – a radioactive substance called iodine that helps shrink the thyroid gland, reducing its activity (the radiation contained in iodine is a very low dose and does not pose a threat to health)
- **Surgery** – in a small number of cases surgery may be required to remove some or all of the thyroid gland, particularly if there is a large goitre



# **UNDERACTIVE THYROID HEALTH CARE LEAFLET**

## **Symptoms**

An underactive thyroid, also called hypothyroidism, means your thyroid gland does not produce enough hormones. Common signs of an underactive thyroid are:

- Tiredness
- Weight gain
- Feeling depressed
- Being sensitive to the cold
- Dry skin and hair
- Muscle aches

## **Treatment**

Treatment for an underactive thyroid involves taking daily hormone-replacement tablets, called levothyroxine, to raise thyroxine levels, usually for the rest of the person's life.

If it's not treated, an underactive thyroid can lead to complications, including heart disease, goitre, pregnancy problems and a life-threatening condition called myxoedema coma (although this is very rare).

An underactive thyroid cannot be prevented. Most cases are caused by the immune system attacking the thyroid or by damage to the thyroid that can occur during some treatments for thyroid cancer and an overactive thyroid.