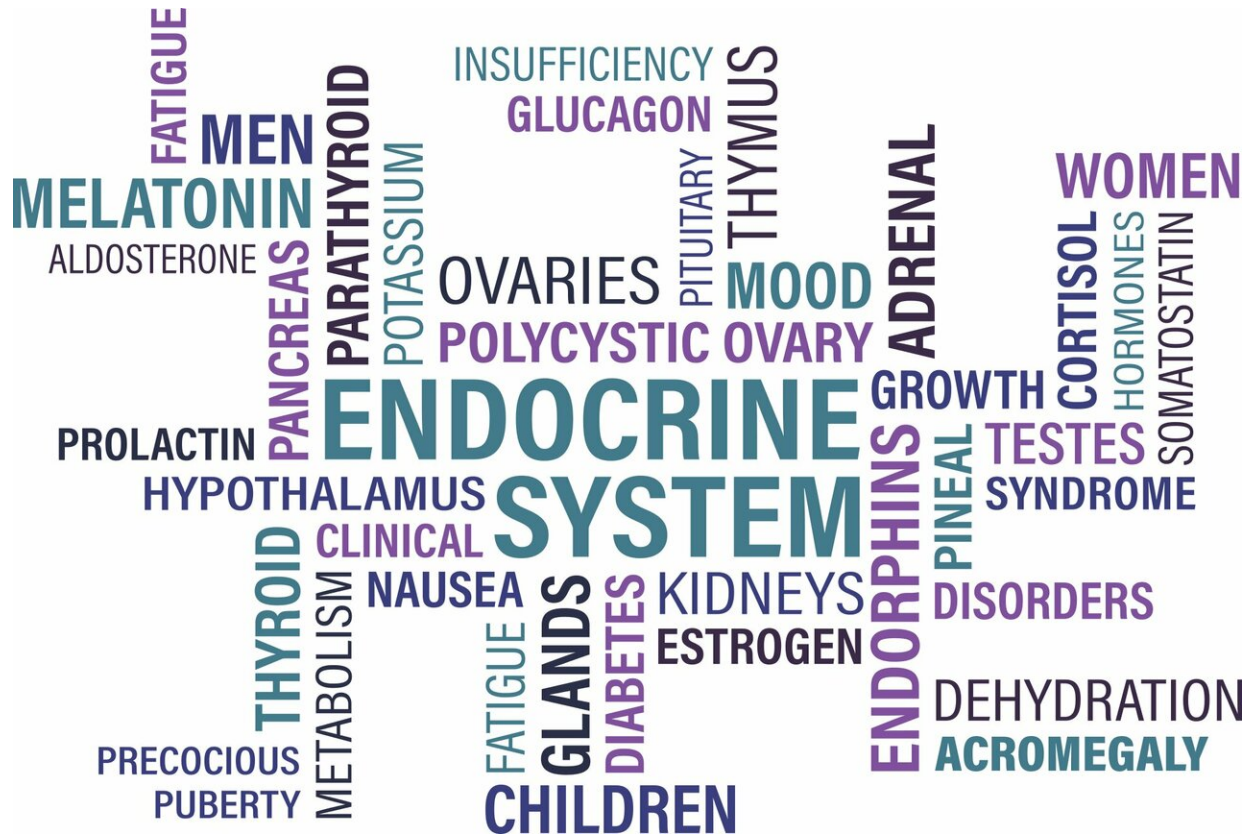


What is Hashimoto's disease?

January 13 2022, by Laurel Kelly



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January is Thyroid Awareness Month, which makes this a good time to learn more about Hashimoto's disease.

Hashimoto's disease, also known as Hashimoto's thyroiditis, is an autoimmune disorder where your immune system creates antibodies that

damage your [thyroid gland](#). The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland at the base of your neck. Your thyroid produces hormones that regulate your heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature and weight.

Hashimoto's disease is the most common cause of hypothyroidism, or [underactive thyroid](#), in the U.S. It primarily affects middle-aged women, but it also can occur in men and women of any age and in children. Other factors that may contribute to your risk of developing Hashimoto's disease include having another autoimmune disease, such as [rheumatoid arthritis](#), Type 1 diabetes or lupus; a family history of thyroid or other [autoimmune diseases](#); and exposure to excessive levels of environmental radiation.

You might not notice signs or symptoms of Hashimoto's disease at first, or you may notice a swelling at the front of your throat. Hashimoto's disease typically progresses slowly over years and causes chronic thyroid damage, leading to a drop in thyroid hormone levels in your blood. Your health care provider may test for Hashimoto's disease if you're feeling increasingly tired or sluggish; have dry skin, constipation and a hoarse voice; or have had previous thyroid problems or a goiter.

Treatment for Hashimoto's disease may include observation and use of medications. If there's no evidence of hormone deficiency and your thyroid is functioning normally, your [health care provider](#) may suggest a wait-and-see approach. If you need medication, chances are you'll need it for the rest of your life.

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