



A GUIDE FROM MELISSA FOREMAN

Understanding Hypothyroidism

A gentle, practical guide to a condition that affects far more of us than most people realise — what it is, why it happens, and how to recognise it in yourself.

Melissa Foreman

BSc (Hons) RSHom Nat Dip · Homeopath & Naturopath

A condition more common than you'd think

In my clinic, I see hypothyroidism more than almost anything else — and it's rarely on anyone's radar until they're already exhausted, low, and wondering why nothing quite feels right.

Hypothyroidism happens when the thyroid gland, a small butterfly-shaped gland at the front of your neck, stops producing enough thyroid hormone for your body's needs. It tends to come on gradually, which is exactly why it's so often missed. Your metabolism slows a little at a time, and by the time you notice, it can feel like it's crept up on you.

1 in 20

PEOPLE AFFECTED WORLDWIDE

8–9×

MORE COMMON IN WOMEN

Gradual

ONSET, OFTEN MISSED

This guide brings together what I most want my patients to understand — the signs to look out for, what's actually happening in the body, and what tends to cause it. My hope is that it helps you feel more informed, and a little less in the dark, whether you're newly diagnosed or simply wondering if this is what you've been feeling.

Signs your thyroid may need attention

Symptoms tend to build slowly, so it's common to adjust to feeling this way without realising it isn't how you're meant to feel. If several of these are familiar, it's worth having your thyroid checked.

- Tiredness and fatigue
- Weight gain
- Low mood
- Muscle aches and weakness
- Dry, scaly skin
- Reduced libido
- Irregular or heavy periods
- Feeling the cold more than usual
- Constipation
- Slower movements and thinking
- Muscle cramps
- Brittle hair and nails, or hair thinning at the outer eyebrows
- Tingling or numbness in the hands (carpal tunnel)
- A sore or scratchy throat

"Most patients tell me they'd stopped noticing how tired they felt — it had simply become normal."

None of these on their own are proof of a thyroid problem — plenty have other explanations. But taken together, and especially if several have crept in gradually over months rather than arriving suddenly, they're a good reason to ask for a thyroid function test.

What's actually happening in your body

The thyroid's main job is powering energy production inside your cells. When it isn't producing enough hormone, that energy production slows down — which is why fatigue, low mood, and aches are usually the first things people notice.

Your thyroid produces two key hormones: T4 (thyroxine) and T3 (triiodothyronine). T3 is the active hormone — the one that actually does the work of speeding up metabolism and generating heat — but only a small amount is made directly in the thyroid gland. The rest is converted from T4, elsewhere in the body, as and when it's needed. When that conversion process is disrupted, T3 levels can drop even when T4 looks fine on paper, which is one reason hypothyroidism can be trickier to catch than a single test result suggests.

In short: less thyroid hormone means less cellular energy, and less cellular energy is what sits behind almost every symptom on the previous page — from the fatigue and low mood to the cold hands and slow digestion.

This is also why standard blood tests don't always tell the full story. A TSH reading within the "normal" range doesn't rule out a conversion problem further down the line — it's one of the reasons I always look at the whole picture, not just a single number.

What causes hypothyroidism

Hashimoto's disease

In countries with sufficient dietary iodine, Hashimoto's is by far the most common cause — responsible for as many as 95% of cases in the US. It's an autoimmune condition, where the immune system mistakenly targets the thyroid gland. A goitre (a visible swelling at the front of the neck) or thyroid nodules can be early signs. In my experience, Hashimoto's often develops alongside periods of significant stress or unresolved trauma, and I frequently see a thread of underlying anxiety running through it.

Iodine deficiency

Worldwide, this is the leading cause of hypothyroidism, since iodine is essential for producing T3 and T4. The UK has long been considered iodine-sufficient — since the 1930s, iodine has entered our food chain via cattle feed — but recent research suggests the population is now mildly to moderately deficient, largely due to depleted soil. Teenage girls, pregnant women, vegetarians, and vegans are particularly at risk.

Damage to the thyroid gland

Thyroid surgery, radioactive iodine treatment, radiotherapy to the head or neck, and certain medications — including amiodarone, interleukin-2, and lithium — can all affect the thyroid's ability to function.

Congenital causes

Occasionally, hypothyroidism is present from birth due to the thyroid gland not developing as expected. This is rare.

Worth knowing: sleep quality matters more here than people expect. Melatonin plays a real part in healthy thyroid function, so poor or disrupted sleep can act as a quiet trigger alongside any of the causes above.

You don't have to work this out on your own

If a number of these symptoms sound familiar, that's worth paying attention to — and worth talking through with someone who'll take the time to look at the whole picture, not just one test result.

I work with people at every stage of this — from first noticing something's off, to living well alongside a long-term diagnosis. Homeopathy sits alongside conventional care rather than replacing it, and I'm always happy to work with your GP or endocrinologist where that's useful. There's no pressure and no obligation here, just a conversation.

Have a free 15-minute chat

A short, no-obligation call to talk through your symptoms and whether homeopathy could help.

[BOOK YOUR FREE CHAT](#)

*With warmth,
Melissa*