

Patient information

Thyroxine Replacement Therapy

Diabetes and Endocrinology Department

Why do I need this replacement therapy?

You need this because you are unable to produce enough of the hormone thyroxine. This may be because your thyroid gland has failed to work properly or because you have had surgery or medical treatment for other thyroid conditions. You can also need thyroxine replacement if you have had a problem with your pituitary gland.

What will I feel like without enough thyroxine?

Common symptoms of under production of thyroxine are dry skin and hair. Women especially may find they have thinning of the hair. A feeling of sluggishness and general lack of energy is common. You may find you become constipated and gain weight even though your appetite is poor. You can also feel the cold more.

What happens when I take the treatment?

You should start to feel less tired and have more energy within a few weeks. Changes in the quality of your skin and hair can take some time for you to be able to notice them.

Your appetite should return to normal reasonably soon after starting the treatment and if weight gain was a problem you should see some weight loss.

How is the treatment given?

The treatment is given in tablets, which are taken each day, usually in one dose in the morning. The dose varies person to person and you will have your blood checked by your doctor or specialist nurse to ensure you are on the correct dose for you. If you miss a dose do not take extra to make it up, simply continue with your next dose as usual. Please take your thyroxine medication in the morning, at least 30 minutes before breakfast and caffeine containing fluids and any other medications you may be prescribed.

What are the side effects?

The aim of the therapy is to replace the thyroxine you would produce normally so side effects should not occur; occasionally, people can experience muscle pain / weakness when they first start taking this medication. These symptoms usually subside within a few weeks. If your dose is too high you may experience some irregular heartbeats with palpitations. Feelings of being over anxious and 'hyped' up can also occur sometimes. Sweating and an intolerance of high temperatures are also common.

Are there any alternative treatments?

Levothyroxine is the most common form of replacement. Another thyroid hormone called Liothyronine can sometimes be used however this is not something we routinely offer.

What happens if I don't take the treatment?

Without thyroxine your symptoms of tiredness, lethargy and general slowing down would continue. You would feel the cold more and weight gain would persist even with a reduced appetite.

Constipation would be a problem, skin and hair would be dry with women especially noticing a thinning of hair. Eventually you can develop problems with your heart, having chest pains with very little physical effort and may even develop a loss of hearing.

What else should I know?

- Once you start treatment it will be continued for life.
- You should carry identification with you to alert people to the fact that you take thyroxine, such as a card or bracelet/pendant. This can be important if you are ever in an accident.
- When you are taking thyroxine you are exempt from prescription charges. You can get a form from your family doctor (GP) to arrange for an exemption certificate.
- It might also be useful to carry a list of your medicines and their doses with you and to leave a copy with your partner and/or parents.

This is intended as a general guide only. It is to supplement the information provided with your medication.

Please be sure to read carefully any information provided by your pharmacist

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further Information

Please feel free to contact the Endocrine Specialist Nurses with any questions you may have. There is an answer machine where you can leave your name and contact details. We will return all calls.

The Endocrinology Specialist Nurses

Tel: 0151 706 2417

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2417

Related Patient information leaflets:

Hypothyroidism (PIF 1050)

There is a very good patient support group, which offers excellent advice through letters and telephone contact. They also hold local area group meetings.

They are:

British Thyroid Foundation
Suite 12, One Sceptre House
Hornbeam Square North
Hornbeam Park
Harrogate
HG2 8BP
Tel: 01423 810093

www.btf-thyroid.org

Email: info@btf-thyroid.org

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Review date: March 2026

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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