



HYPOTHYROIDISM

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Hypothyroidism results from underproduction of thyroid hormones by neck glands, which regulate metabolism and impact multiple body systems.

Most common cause: autoimmune destruction of thyroid tissue. Others: tumors, metabolic diseases, congenital conditions.

Signs include lethargy, weight gain, tail hair loss, recurrent skin infections, dull/dry coat, weakness, and heat-seeking. Severe cases: seizures.

Primarily affects middle-aged dogs (avg. 7 years); breeds: Doberman Pinscher, Golden Retriever, Irish Setter, Great Dane, Dachshund, Boxer. Rare in cats.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis requires blood tests measuring thyroid hormone levels alongside thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), typically sent to a specialty lab.

A single low thyroid reading is insufficient for diagnosis. Illness can trigger "euthyroid sick syndrome"—a temporary hormone drop—causing false positives.

Always retest after the patient recovers before initiating therapy.

TREATMENT

Patients are placed on a medication that supplements thyroid hormone (thyroxine). This medication needs to be given daily and is a lifelong treatment. Patients usually respond well to treatment.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Hypothyroidism is a lifelong condition, but proper diagnosis and treatment enable normal quality of life and lifespan.
- Administer medication daily at the same time, separate from food and other meds—food reduces effectiveness, so consistency is key.
- Never adjust or stop without vet guidance: dog doses are often 10x higher than human. Rechecks begin frequently (every few months), then 1-2x/year to monitor blood levels and adjust.