

Shalamar Hospital is striving to provide our patients quality health care, at lowest possible costs. Our hospital is continually active in pioneering new treatments and therapies to improve the lives of people in our community.



Thyroid and Psychological Issues

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Individuals who have thyroid disorders typically experience emotional or mental health symptoms, in addition to physical symptoms. This is particularly true for those with hyperthyroidism (an overactive thyroid), hypothyroidism (an underactive thyroid), thyroid-related eye disease, or thyroid cancer.

HOW CAN A THYROID DISORDER AFFECT MY EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING?

Having a thyroid disorder can increase your emotional sensitivity and cause changes in mood that may be sudden and unpredictable. Emotional symptoms can vary depending on the type of thyroid disorder you have. Hyperthyroidism (an overactive thyroid) can lead to feelings of anxiety, nervousness, racing heart, and trembling. Hypothyroidism (an underactive thyroid) can cause depression, low mood, tearfulness, loss of appetite, lethargy, and anxiety. Both types of thyroid disorder may result in mood swings, irritability, snappiness, and sleeping difficulties. These emotional symptoms can also be caused by the stress of managing daily life with a thyroid condition.

HOW CAN THYROID DISORDERS AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH?

Thyroid disorders, particularly underactive thyroid, can lead to mental or cognitive problems such as poor concentration, short-term memory lapses, and lack of mental alertness. These symptoms can be concerning for older people who worry about developing dementia, but they are usually not as severe as those seen in dementia.

The psychological symptoms may arise due to abnormal thyroid hormone levels, especially rapid fluctuations in these levels. Effective control of thyroid levels is crucial to stabilize mood, especially in cases of hyperthyroidism. In some cases, treatment for a thyroid disorder can also lead to psychological symptoms, such as depression aggravated by steroid use or fatigue and decreased mental alertness caused by beta blockers. Physical changes associated with a thyroid disorder, such as those caused by thyroid eye disease, hair loss, or weight changes, can contribute to low self-esteem and negative mood. While the role of stress in precipitating thyroid disease is uncertain, it can exacerbate symptoms and make them more difficult to manage. Additionally, forgetting to take medication regularly can upset the hormone balance and worsen psychological symptoms. It is important to consider all factors that may be contributing to psychological symptoms and seek appropriate support and treatment.

When it comes to treatment, the good news is that in the majority of cases, psychological symptoms tend to improve as the thyroid disorder is brought under control through treatment, especially if the thyroid is the underlying cause. However, it's important to note that improvement may not be immediate and it's not uncommon for people to continue feeling emotionally and mentally unwell for some time even after their blood tests have returned to normal. In seeking help, there are various options available:

- It's important to talk to your doctor and ask for a referral to a specialist with experience in managing thyroid disorders.
 - Don't hesitate to confide in a family member or close friend who may be able to support you during this difficult time, or talk to others who have had similar experiences - the British Thyroid Foundation has volunteer telephone helpline contacts and local support groups that may be helpful.
 - It's vital not to feel embarrassed or awkward about discussing psychological symptoms with your doctor, as these may be an integral part of your thyroid disorder. Feel free to ask as many questions as you need to better understand your condition.
 - These symptoms can also impact your loved ones, work, and school performance. Hence, it's essential to communicate with your employer and teachers and inform them of the situation.
- Physical symptoms such as hair loss, weight gain or loss, and thyroid eye disease may also have an impact on how you feel. Your doctor can refer you to a specialist who can provide further assistance.

Although the root cause of psychological symptoms may be physical, anxiety or depression may require their own treatment. Non-drug interventions such as relaxation techniques or short-term psychotherapy can be effective, and antidepressants may be prescribed for more persistent problems.

If symptoms remain severe or don't improve even after a reasonable period of thyroid treatment, you should ask your doctor to refer you to a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist with expertise in psychological problems associated with physical illness.

Overall, the outlook for most thyroid disorders is favorable, and people usually make a full recovery and lead normal lives once their thyroid condition is treated. If symptoms persist, it may be due to an alternative explanation, and additional treatment and evaluation may be necessary.

Important Points:

1. As your thyroid condition stabilizes, your emotional and mental health problems should improve, and the long-term outlook is positive.
2. If your symptoms persist despite treatment, it may be due to slow response or another underlying cause not related to your thyroid condition.
3. Talking to a trusted family member or friend, or seeking support from a BTF volunteer who has gone through similar experiences, can be helpful during this challenging time.
4. Consulting with your doctor, or requesting a referral to a specialist, can provide valuable assistance.
5. Thyroid problems often have a genetic component, so it may be beneficial for family members who are experiencing symptoms to discuss the possibility of thyroid testing with their own doctor.