



Cumbria Advisory Thyroid Service

INFORMATION SHEET



DEPRESSION AND THE THYROID

People with an overactive thyroid may exhibit fluctuating depression with sadness and problems with sleep and appetite.

An underactive thyroid can lead to progressive loss of interest and initiative, slowing of mental processes, poor memory for recent events and also depression with a paranoid flavour.

When effective thyroid treatment is begun, the general response is quite favourable. Vitality returns and the mental processes become efficient again. If there is a residue of emotional difficulties, it may be related not to the thyroid gland but to other aspects of life.

Psychological changes:

- Sluggishness and apathy – You can't seem to care even about people close to you and nothing catches your interest.
- Your senses of smell, taste and hearing are blunted, so that such pleasures as eating or listening to music are dulled too.
- A constant feeling of fatigue, although you are doing less than usual.
- Drowsiness all day and evening – You never see the end of a television programme because you drop off.
- Libido – Your sexual feeling – is non-existent, however attractive your partner.
- Efficiency is well down.
- Your memory is unreliable, especially for recent events.
- Your concentration is poor, you can't cope with anything heavier than a magazine or newspaper article.
- Decisions are put off. Your mind goes round and round wearily getting nowhere.
- Day to day tasks seem very challenging.
- Nothing feels right about yourself or anything else. This is the worst aspect and you can't shake it off. The two main strands are depression and anxiety. Two thirds of people with thyroid deficiency suffer from depression, one third from anxiety, often overlapping.

Depression includes pervading unhappiness, loss of hope, and the feeling that you are no good. You try to avoid other people, and wish you could go to sleep until the nightmare is over. Appetite, energy and sleep are all reduced.

Anxiety results in you feeling agitated, sure something will go wrong and worried about things you would have taken in your own stride before. You can't relax, but you can't get anything done.

SUGGESTED TREATMENTS FOR DEPRESSION:

MEDICATION – ANTIDEPRESSANTS

Minor depression does not usually require drug treatment.

Support and help with coming to terms with the cause of the depression is often all that is needed.

Moderate or severe depression usually requires drug treatment, which is effective in most cases.

Antidepressants may have to be taken for many months. Treatment should not be stopped too soon because symptoms are likely to reappear.

When treatment is stopped, the dose should be gradually reduced over several weeks because withdrawal symptoms may occur if stopped abruptly.

MEDICATION:

Antidepressant –

Imipramine, Dothiepin, Effexor

They can take up to two weeks to have an effect. They are fairly safe in clinical use and generally have only mild and transient side-effects.

Anxiolytics (i.e) –

Diazepam, Temazepam

These are generally used only for short periods when anxiety is a prominent feature.

Night sedation (i.e) –

Nitrazepam, Zopiclone

Used if sleep disturbance is present. However this remedy is only effective for short periods of time.

PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

* Individual psychotherapy, to work through unresolved issues to release repressed emotions and to increase insight.

* Behavioural therapy, to increase the incidence of reinforcement in the person's lifestyle. Avoidance of negatively reinforcing experiences.

* Cognitive therapy, to develop more positive thought processes and expectations, and to change dysfunctional and automatic negative thoughts.

* Assertive training, to help the person express their feelings and to raise their self-esteem.

* Family or couples therapy, to enable the couple and/or family to be more supportive and communicate more effectively.

* Development of coping and stress management skills.

* Group work, to help other people share their experiences and work together to seek solutions.

* Voluntary organisations – self help groups etc.

C.A.T.S RECOMMENDS YOU ALWAYS SEEK YOUR DOCTORS ADVICE

Disclaimer

The purpose of this information leaflet is to help those suffering with thyroid disease. Whilst every effort is made to provide accurate information, it is impossible to ensure that the information given is relevant to every individual. No responsibility is accepted by CATS and it is recommended and essential, that if in any doubt about your condition, that you should always contact your doctor, specialist physician or surgeon to seek medical advice.