

CUMBRIA ADVISORY THYROID SERVICE

Routine testing? - Borderline thyroidism

Subclinical hypothyroidism is the term used by the medical profession for borderline underactivity of the thyroid gland.

In medical terms it means the hypothyroidism hasn't progressed very far and is still asymptomatic. Your blood test T4 (thyroid hormone) readings would be very close to normal, but your TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone) would be higher than normal.

At this moment in time there is some discussion about routine TSH testing (Thyroid Screening) in certain groups of people for subclinical hypothyroidism. For instance such a project could include anyone with a family history of thyroid disease, in particular women after childbirth and women over 40, anyone (male or female over 60 and because TSH testing is so simple, this would be an opportunity to nip thyroid problems in the bud, before severe symptoms fully develop. Earlier diagnosis would mean earlier treatment, earlier control and earlier balance of what can be a debilitating disease.

The benefits of screening tests

The benefits of making the TSH test easily and openly available (perhaps through local clinics and health centres) are endless and very obvious. A patient would immediately become aware if they were hypo or hyperactive and afterwards report to their own GP for further evaluation and treatment.

While for patients already on thyroid medication, screening would give them an excellent opportunity to regularly monitor their own health and treatment, and this would surely be beneficial and helpful for doctors.

Borderline hyperthyroid tests will show your T4 at the top end of the reference range or sometimes just slightly above but your TSH would be below the normal range.

If you get borderline test results it is important to have repeat tests at regular intervals (approx every two to three months as in most cases borderline results will eventually develop into Hyper or Hypo thyroid dysfunction.