

# Thyroid Lab Testing

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*The thyroid gland, located in the front part of the neck, produces thyroid hormones (T4, T3) that help control the rate at which the body uses energy. The pituitary gland in the brain releases TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone) to either speed up or slow down production of the thyroid gland based on feedback it gets from the levels of thyroid hormone in the body.*

## Thyroid lab tests

Thyroid testing is used to evaluate thyroid function and/or help diagnose hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism. Typically, the initial test to evaluate the thyroid function is the TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone) test. If indicated, specific tests for free T4 and/or free T3 may be added. Sometimes thyroid antibody tests are also added to see whether the body has decided to fight its own thyroid gland.

## What do the lab test results mean?

**Hypothyroidism:** When the thyroid releases too little T4, the TSH signal from the brain will increase (trying to encourage the gland to make more). Signs and symptoms of hypothyroidism may include: weight gain, dry skin, constipation, cold intolerance, puffy skin, hair loss, fatigue, depression, and/or menstrual irregularity in women.

**Hyperthyroidism:** When the thyroid gland is making too much T4, the TSH signal from the brain will decrease (trying to encourage the gland to make less). Signs and symptoms of hyperthyroidism may include: increased heart rate, anxiety, irritability, weight loss, difficulty sleeping, tremors in the hands, weakness, diarrhea, and/or bulging of the eyes.

## Interpretation

Decisions about how to interpret and act upon the results depend on a lot of factors, including the patient's symptoms and medical history. Mild abnormalities may require more detailed or repeat testing over time. Significant abnormalities usually require treatment or referral to an endocrine specialist.

**Your test results:** TSH \_\_\_\_\_ T4 (free) \_\_\_\_\_ T3 (free) \_\_\_\_\_ Thyroid Antibodies \_\_\_\_\_

- Normal
- Borderline or Subclinical
- Hypothyroid
- Hyperthyroid

## Recommendations

- Normal, no follow up necessary
- Add tests to current blood test sample:       TSH     T4 (free)     T3 (free)     Thyroid Antibodies
- Get blood test(s) in \_\_\_\_\_ weeks / months:     TSH     T4 (free)     T3 (free)     Thyroid Antibodies
- Refer to endocrine specialist
- Initiate treatment: \_\_\_\_\_