

Hypothyroidism



What is hypothyroidism and what are the symptoms?

Hypothyroidism is a common endocrine disorder in dogs. It creates a wide range of symptoms resulting from the underproduction of hormones by the thyroid gland (located in the throat region near the voice box). The thyroid hormone's main function is to set the pet's metabolic rate at the right pace. Too much hormone causes an overactive metabolism and too little causes a sluggish metabolism. Hypothyroidism sets your pet's "idle system" on low. This can cause abnormalities in a variety of body systems and organs. Hypothyroidism usually occurs because the thyroid gland was damaged by inflammation of the gland, causing it to no longer produce enough thyroid hormone. Hypothyroidism is usually associated with a number of physical signs. Affected pets often experience weight gain, loss of energy and increased shedding or hair loss. Hair is often lost on the tail giving the appearance of a "rat tail." Hypothyroid pets are also more vulnerable to infections (especially of the ears and skin).

How will the doctor diagnose and treat my pet for hypothyroidism?

Hypothyroidism is diagnosed with a blood test. Fortunately, treatment is easy. Your pet needs to be given a thyroid hormone supplement every day. These are available in tablet or chewable forms. In the beginning, your Banfield doctor will schedule several follow-up blood work visits to monitor your pet's thyroid levels to ensure the proper dose is supplied. Once the proper dose of medication has been determined, your pet will need to have thyroid levels tested every 6-12 months or sooner if problems arise. If your pet has related skin or ear problems, your doctor may also recommend medications or treatments for these conditions.

What can I expect from the treatment?

Once treatment begins, and the proper dose of medication has been determined, your pet's condition should improve rather quickly. Most people notice that their pet is more active within one or two weeks and losing weight within four to eight weeks after starting the medication. Skin and hair concerns take a little longer to resolve but should improve noticeably within two to three months.

What should I be aware of?

For the success of this treatment it is very important that you consistently administer your pet's medication as directed by your doctor. **Monitor the number of pills you have available and call at least two days in advance to arrange for a refill.**

Contact your Banfield doctor immediately if you notice the following in your pet:

- Elevated excitability or restlessness
- Excess panting
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Decreased activity (more so than normal)
- Infections (especially of the ears and skin)
- Increased hair loss (sometimes happens just after beginning treatment which allows new hair to grow)
- Flaky or greasy skin
- Increased water intake or increased urination

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about the health of your pet, please contact your Banfield hospital.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

