

What is Hashimoto (Hashimoto's) disease?

Hashimoto disease, also known as Hashimoto's thyroiditis, is an autoimmune disease. It is more common in women than men and also increases in frequency as people age. Hashimoto's disease is the most common cause of hypothyroidism.

Endocrine Connection

Autoimmune diseases occur when the body's immune system starts producing antibodies that target areas of the body that it shouldn't target within itself. Generally, the immune system is expected to protect our body and help it fight disease. In Hashimoto's disease, antibodies called 'thyroid peroxidase antibodies' (TPO) target the thyroid gland; the thyroid becomes inflamed and gradually destroyed; As a result, it cannot produce thyroid hormones as efficiently as it should. This is called low thyroid hormone levels "hypothyroidism." In some, the gland may become enlarged (goiter) due to thyroid inflammation, while in others the gland may become smaller. Hypothyroidism caused by Hashimoto's disease progresses slowly over months or years; 90% of patients develop hypothyroidism.

Both genetic and environmental factors play a role in the development of Hashimoto's disease. Hashimoto's disease is common in the family.