

Review Article


# Stress: A Hidden Culprit in Hypothyroidism – A Homeopathic Perspective

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## Abstract

Hypothyroidism is a prevalent endocrine disorder with multi-factorial causes such as iodine deficiency, autoimmune diseases, and genetic predispositions. However, recent studies suggest that chronic stress may play a pivotal role in the pathogenesis of hypothyroidism. Stress leads to dysregulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, altering thyroid function by increasing cortisol levels, suppressing thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), and reducing T3 and T4 production. Homeopathy, with its holistic approach, aims to address the root causes of illness, including stress-induced thyroid dysfunction. This article explores the pathophysiological link between stress and hypothyroidism, highlights homeopathic remedies beneficial in managing stress-induced thyroid dysfunction, and underscores the need for an integrative approach to treatment.

## Key words

Stress induced Hypothyroidism, Thyroid, Cortisol, HPA axis, HPT axis, Homeopathy and Hypothyroidism, Hormonal Dysfunction, Anxiety, Depression.

## Introduction

Hypothyroidism is a prevalent endocrine disorder resulting from inadequate thyroid hormone production, affecting millions of individuals

worldwide. Due to fast-paced unhealthy life style and long continued stress the prevalence is increasing day by day and affecting the future of the entire society. Stress leads to dysregulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis,

altering thyroid function by increasing cortisol levels, suppressing thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), and reducing T3 and T4 production [1]. The prevalence of self-reported goiter or thyroid disorders was reported as 2.2% in NFHS-IV (2015-2016) and increased to 2.9% in NFHS-V (2019-2021), as per the National Family Health Survey data. As per NFHS V, the details of States/UTs wise cases reported in Madhya Pradesh are 1087 of Women per 100000 [2].

Deficiency of thyroid hormone affects more or less every system in our body. And it manifests with symptoms like fatigue, cold intolerance, and weight gain. The traditional causes include autoimmune diseases, iodine deficiency, and genetics. However, emerging research indicates that chronic stress plays a significant role in triggering and exacerbating hypothyroidism by disrupting the hormonal balance, particularly through the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, leading to elevated cortisol levels, which negatively impact thyroid hormone synthesis and metabolism. Homeopathy, with its individualized treatment approach, offers a promising alternative in managing stress-induced hypothyroidism [3].

This paper reviews the physiological effects of stress on thyroid function, the relationship between stress and hypothyroidism, and how homeopathic treatments may offer a holistic approach to managing stress-induced thyroid dysfunction.

## **The Impact of Stress on Thyroid Function**

### **1. Stress and the HPA-HPT Axis Interplay**

The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and hypothalamic-pituitary-thyroid (HPT) axis are interconnected systems responsible for maintaining hormonal balance in the body. Stress activates the HPA axis, leading to the release of cortisol from the adrenal glands. Elevated cortisol levels inhibit the production of thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), which, in turn, reduces thyroid hormone secretion. This suppression of thyroid activity may lead to hypothyroidism [1].

### **2. Role of Cortisol in Thyroid Dysregulation**

Cortisol, a stress hormone, plays a central role in thyroid function. Under stress, elevated cortisol levels inhibit the conversion of thyroxine (T4) to the active form triiodothyronine (T3), leading to decreased T3 levels. Additionally, prolonged cortisol secretion can cause oxidative stress, further impairing thyroid function. The thyroid's response to stress and cortisol is a critical factor in the development of hypothyroidism [4, 5].

### **3. Psychological Stress and Autoimmune Thyroid Disorders**

Chronic psychological stress has been shown to influence immune function, potentially triggering autoimmune responses that lead to thyroid dysfunction. Stress can increase the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines, which in turn can trigger autoimmune diseases like Hashimoto's thyroiditis. This autoimmune attack damages thyroid tissues, leading to hypothyroidism [6] (**Figure – 1**).

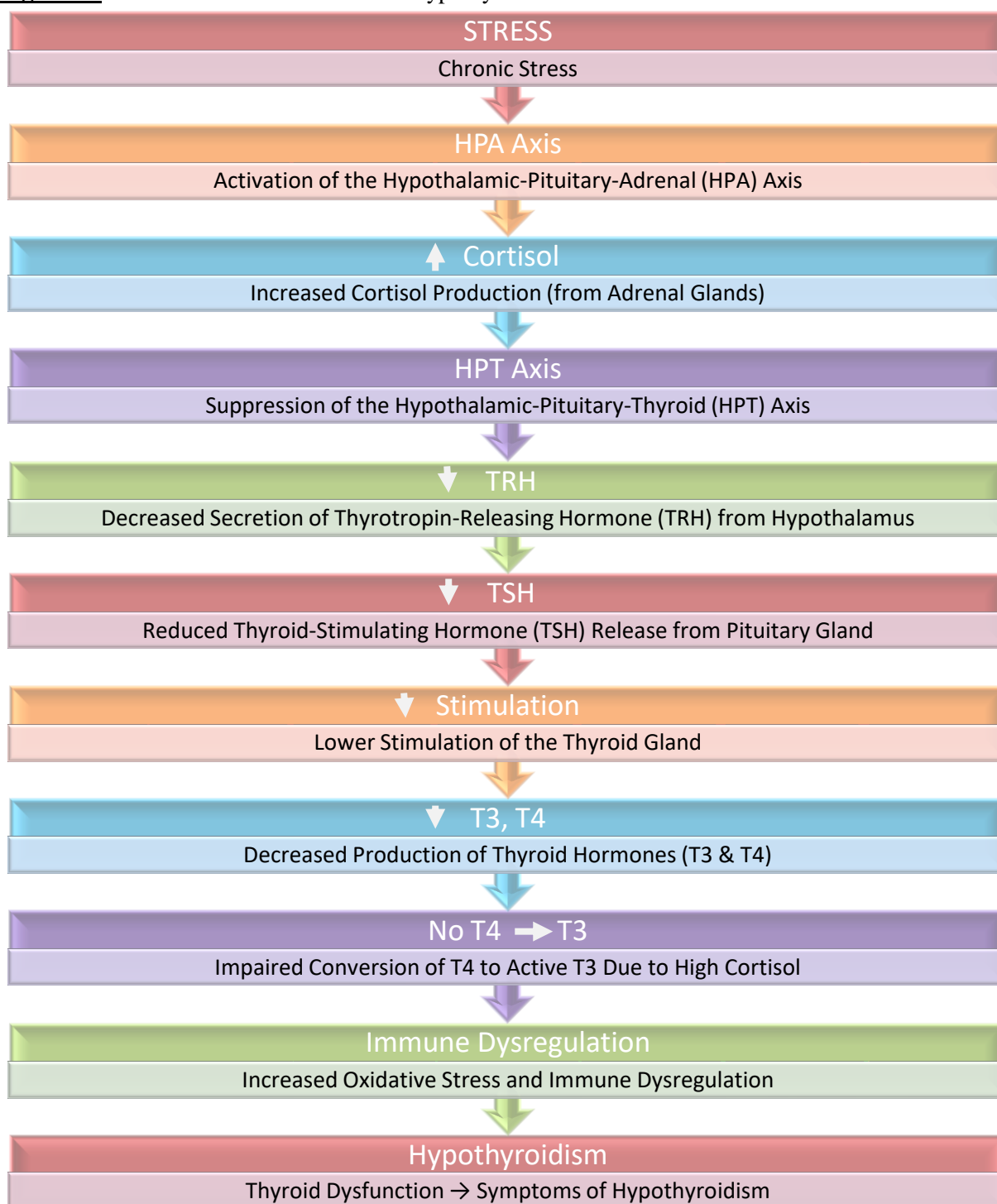
### **Homeopathic Approach to Stress-Induced Hypothyroidism**

Homeopathy considers the individual's physical, emotional, and psychological state to prescribe constitutional remedies. Some key homeopathic remedies for stress-related hypothyroidism include:

- **Calcarea Carb:** Suitable for the individuals with sluggish metabolism, excessive fatigue, cold intolerance, and anxiety. Often indicated in those who feel overwhelmed by stress and responsibilities, showing a tendency toward weight gain and sluggish thyroid function.
- **Ignatia Amara:** This remedy is used for individuals experiencing emotional stress, grief, and mood swings, all of which can negatively affect thyroid function.
- **Lycopodium Clavatum:** Lycopodium is indicated when there is fatigue, digestive disturbance, and lack of self-confidence. These symptoms may exacerbate hypothyroid conditions.

- **Natrum Muriaticum:** For patients with suppressed emotions, especially grief, this remedy is often useful, particularly when there are weight gain and cold intolerance symptoms.
- **Sepia Officinalis:** This remedy is particularly beneficial for women with hormonal imbalances, irritability, and exhaustion, common in hypothyroid patients.
- **Thyroidinum:** A homeopathic remedy derived from the thyroid gland itself, used to stimulate thyroid function and improve energy levels [7, 8].

**Figure - 1:** Mechanism of Stress Induced Hypothyroidism.



### **Holistic Management Alongside Homeopathy**

Homeopathy doesn't work in isolation; it should be combined with other natural therapies for comprehensive management. Below are some of the lifestyle interventions recommended for patients with stress-induced hypothyroidism:

- **Dietary Modifications:** Nutrients such as selenium, zinc, and iodine are essential for thyroid function. A balanced diet rich in these nutrients helps support thyroid health.
- **Stress Management Techniques:** Practices like yoga, meditation, and mindfulness can help reduce cortisol levels and restore the hormonal balance of the body.
- **Lifestyle Changes:** Adequate sleep, regular physical activity, and limiting caffeine intake can help regulate thyroid function and improve overall health [9].

### **Rubrics Related to Stress as a Hidden Culprit in Hypothyroidism**

#### **1. Mental and Emotional Impact of Stress on Thyroid Function**

MIND – AILMENTS FROM – Mental exertion, [13].

MIND – AILMENTS FROM – Anxiety [13].

MIND – AILMENTS FROM – Grief, Prolonged [13].

MIND – ANXIETY – health about [10].

MIND – FEAR – Disease [10].

SADNESS – Low Spirit, Mental Depression [12].

#### **2. Endocrine System Dysfunction and Thyroid Regulation**

GLAND – THYROID – Hypothyroidism [11].

GLAND – THYROID – Swelling [11].

THYROID – Dysfunction [12].

GENITALIA – FEMALE – Menses – scanty. [10].

HAIR – FALLING – Grief from. [12].

#### **3. General Symptoms of Stress-Induced Hypothyroidism**

GENERALITIES – OBESITY – Hormonal – Thyroid Gland [14].

GENERALITIES – OBESITY – Grief after [14].

GENERALITIES – WEAKNESS – morning – rising on [10].

GENERALS – LABORATORY FINDING – Basal Metabolic Rate, Decreased [13].

GENERALS – CHILLY PERSON [13].

GENERALITIES – SWELLING – In General, puffy [10].

GENERALITIES – WEAKNESS – exertion, from slight [10].

### **Conclusion**

Chronic stress is a significant, often overlooked, contributor to hypothyroidism. It causes hormonal dysregulation by interfering with the HPA and HPT axes, leading to a suppression of thyroid function. Homeopathy offers a valuable, individualized treatment approach, addressing both the physical symptoms and underlying emotional stresses that contribute to thyroid dysfunction. By incorporating stress management techniques and holistic therapies, patients can achieve better outcomes and improved thyroid health. Further studies are needed to validate the efficacy of homeopathic treatments in stress-induced hypothyroidism.

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