

Thyroid problems in adults

Introduction

Thyroid problems are common in primary care, and some thyroid conditions may be identified because thyroid function tests (TFTs) were arranged to investigate non-specific symptoms in our patients, such as tiredness. However, some patients who have mild and transiently abnormal TFTs may be at risk of over-diagnosis of thyroid disease and thus over-treatment with thyroxine therapy. Prescriptions for thyroxine are the third most commonly issued in the UK and the commonest in the United States. Number of prescriptions in the UK have risen from 2.8 million prescriptions in 1998 to 29 million in 2014¹.

This module discusses a range of thyroid problems in adults focusing on topics chosen by an inter-professional focus group of practising primary care clinicians. It is important to recognise that a large number of conditions may cause TFTs to be abnormal without there being established and persisting thyroid disease (non-thyroidal illness or sick euthyroidism).

The module aims to cover:

- How to diagnose and manage hypothyroidism
- How to manage hypothyroidism prior to conception and during pregnancy
- How to manage sub-clinical hyperthyroidism
- How to understand thyroid function tests and results
- How to understand liothyronine(T3) and the debate regarding its role in treating thyroid problems
- How to manage thyroid lumps including red flags