



# Understanding Hypothyroidism – An *Anuktavyadhi* in Ayurveda

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## ABSTRACT

Thyroid gland is very crucial endocrine gland of our body. It secretes thyroid hormones which control basic metabolic rate in our body. Hypothyroidism, also called underactive thyroid or low thyroid, is a disorder of the endocrine system in which the thyroid gland does not produce enough thyroid hormone. In modern science there is no permanent cure for hypothyroidism and has many adverse effects too. So, there is a serious need of safe and effective *ayurvedic* management. This review has been made with an effort to understand the disease in *ayurvedic* perspective.

There is no exact term of hypothyroidism in *ayurveda*. *Anukta vyadhi* is neither elaborated nor described by their name in classical text of *ayurveda*. While figuring out the signs and symptoms of hypothyroidism in *ayurvedic* view, the *kapha dosha vrudhhi*, *vata dosha vrudhhi* and *pitta dosha kshaya* is found. Though some physicians see it as a *sthanika vyadhi* under *galganda roga*, but its *dushti lakshanas* are noticed in whole body. Most of the body metabolic activities are controlled by thyroid hormone. In *ayurveda*, this can be correlated with actions of *agni* and hypothyroidism can be considered as a stage of *agnimandya* leading to formation of *ama*. Understanding of hypothyroidism from *ayurvedic* perspective benefits us to give safe & alternative *ayurvedic* management.

**Key Words:** *Hypothyroidism, Anukta Vyadhi, Agnimandya, Ama*

## INTRODUCTION

*Ayurveda* has not specified endocrine disorders, instead for treatment of unspecified syndrome, it emphasizes on thorough observation of pathophysiology and symptoms. Here an attempt has been made to explain hypothyroidism from *ayurvedic* perspective to give a better alternative treatment.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

✓ To study hypothyroidism as *anukta vyadhi* in *ayurveda*.

✓ To study etiopathogenesis of hypothyroidism in *ayurvedic* context.

✓ To study sign and symptoms of hypothyroidism according to *ayurvedic* perspective.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is carried out by different literature search and critical review of collected facts. Pathogenesis of hypothyroidism is obtained by exploring various research databases like pubmed,



embase, and various national and international research databases. The study of various *ayurvedic* texts were made critically and an attempt is made to understand the pathogenesis of hypothyroidism.

### THYROID HORMONE AND AGNI

Majority of body metabolic functions are maintained by thyroid hormones according to modern system of medicine and through *agni* according to *ayurveda*. Metabolic effects of thyroid hormones can be noticed on each & every cell in the body then as well effect of *agni* also seen on each & every cell in the body. Thyroid hormone aids in carbohydrate, protein and fat metabolism<sup>1</sup>. Similarly *agni* digests and absorbs these substances at cellular level. Enhanced or diminished level of thyroid hormone disrupts the normal metabolism and results in hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism. Impaired *agni* is the root cause of all imbalance and diseases<sup>2</sup>. Weakened *agni* causes vitiation of *doshas* and produces symptoms like that of hypothyroidism. Symptoms of hypothyroidism parallels with the symptoms produced by *kapha* and *vata*.

### HYPOTHYROIDISM FROM MODERN AND AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

#### ❖ NIDANA (ETIOLOGICAL FACTORS)

Hypothyroidism is classified into<sup>3</sup>:-

➤ **PRIMARY (THYROID FAILURE):** due to deficient secretion of T3 and T4 hormones. Most common causes of primary hypothyroidism are iodine deficiency, autoimmune thyroid disease, drugs, congenital and iatrogenic.

➤ **SECONDARY (DUE TO PITUTARY TSH DEFICIENCY OR DUE TO HYPOTHALAMIC TRH DEFICIT).**

So far *ayurvedic hetu* is concerned; the etiological factors related to *agnimandya*, *kapha-vata prakopa* and *rasa pradoshaj nidana* will be responsible for genesis of hypothyroidism<sup>4</sup>.

#### ❖ SAMPRAPTI (PATHOGENESIS)

Hypothyroidism results from either deficit of thyroid hormones or by resistance of peripheral tissues to thyroid hormone. Functions of thyroid hormone are similar to functions of *agni*. *Kapha kara aahar - vihar* causes *jatharagni mandya* which leads to formation of *ama* (undigested material). *Ama* causes obstruction in *srotas*. If process of *ama* formation advances, it brings about *dhatwagni mandya* which increases *dhatwgata malasanchaya* and causes morbid *dhatu* formation. *Vata* also get involved in pathogenesis as it gets vitiated by *kapha* and *ama*. *Agnimandya*, vitiated *kapha* and sluggish *vata* lowers the metabolic process throughout the body<sup>5</sup>.

- *Dosha – kapha, vata*
- *Dushya – rasa, meda* (mainly)
- *Agni – agnimandya*
- *Adhithana – sarva sharir*
- *Udbhavsthana – aamashaya*
- *Vyaktisthana – sarva sharir.*

#### RUPA (CLINICAL PRESENTATION)

The comparative study shows that about all symptoms of hypothyroidism can be integrated in *ama lakshana*.



S.No.	SYMPTOMS OF HYPOTHYROIDISM	AMA LAKSHANA <sup>7</sup>
1.	Stunted growth, hoarseness of voice	<i>Srotoroadha</i>
2.	Delayed development milestones, mental impairment, cold intolerance	<i>Balbhrinsha</i>
3.	Oedematous puffy swollen look of face, idiotic look, pot belly, weight gain	<i>Gaurava</i>
4.	Reduced respiratory rate, slow heart rate, decreased hearing, inability to concentrate, joint pain.	<i>Anil mudhata</i>
5.	Lethargy, sleepiness	<i>Aalasya</i>
6.	Low BMR, decreased appetite	<i>Aruchi, apakti</i>
7.	Constipation, decreased perspiration	<i>Malsangha</i>
8.	Thought process slowdown, loss of energy, fatigue, apathy	<i>Klama</i>

## DISCUSSION

Though exact term for hypothyroidism is not described in *ayurveda*. However, a disease named *galganda* defined by neck swelling is well known. *Charaka* characterized it as a solitary swelling<sup>6</sup> while *sushruta* has described it as two encapsulated, big or small swelling, hanging like scrotum, in the anterior angle of neck<sup>7</sup>. *Galganda* can be correlated with the simple goiter, the non-inflammatory, non-neoplastic condition of thyroid gland<sup>8</sup>.

*Agnimandya* is the vitiated state where *agni* is unable to digest even the limited quantity of ingested food. Due to improper digestion *agnimandya* leads to formation of *ama* and the comparative study shows that almost all symptoms of hypothyroidism are in parallel with *ama lakshana*.

Hypothyroidism results in various signs and symptoms which are similar to symptoms of *kapha – vata* increment. *Kapha* symptoms like weight gain, puffy appearance of body, sluggishness, hoarseness of voice, loss of appetite etc... *vata* symptoms like bradycardia, menstrual disturbances, constipation, fatigue, muscle – joint pain, cold intolerance, dry – coarse skin, hairs etc... all these symptoms are produced due to hypo functioning of *agni* and *kapha – vata* increment.

## CONCLUSION

Although the disease hypothyroidism is not described in classical *ayurvedic* texts but *ayurvedic* system of medicine doesn't emphasize on naming the disease. It rather demands understanding the constitutional status of disease and adopting an appropriate treatment principle.

Functions of thyroid hormones are similar to functions of *agni*. Symptoms of *ama* and hypothyroidism are almost similar. *Nidana parivarjana* is the basic treatment of any disease in *ayurveda*. The sole causative factor of *ama* formation is *agnimandya*. Thus the etiology of *agnimandya* can be considered as *nidana* of *ama*.

### ETIOLOGY OF AMA<sup>9</sup>:

- ❖ **Abhojanat:** fasting
- ❖ **Ajeerna bhojana:** eating even after indigestion
- ❖ **Ati bhojana:** over eating
- ❖ **Vishamashana:** improper eating



❖ **Asatmya, guru, shita, ati ruksha, samdushta bhojanat:** ingestion of allergic, heavy, frozen, excessive dry and contaminated food.

❖ **Vyadhi karshanat:** emaciation of body due to chronic disorders

❖ **Desha, kala, ritu vaishmyat:** alteration in region, time and season.

❖ **Virechan, vaman, sneha vibhramat:** deranged *sneha*, *vaman* and *virechan karma*

❖ **Vega vidharnat:** suppressing natural urges.

We see that, many of the causes of *ama dosha* are dietary. Thus by only *nidana parivarjana* of *ama dosha*, we can give symptomatic relief to the patient and restrain further advancement of the disease. Hence based on pathogenesis of hypothyroidism it can be understood that, it mainly occurs due to *agnimandya*, *kapha prakopak* and *rasa pradoshaj aahar – vihar*. These factors must be kept in mind during management of hypothyroidism.



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