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Hypothyroidism

Patient name: _____ Admission: _____

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I. The client/caregiver has a basic understanding of the anatomy and physiology of the thyroid gland.

- A. The thyroid gland is located in the lower neck and in front of the trachea.
- B. It is divided into two lobes and is joined by a band of tissue called isthmus.
- C. It concentrates iodine from food and uses it to synthesize two hormones.
- D. These two hormones regulate the body's metabolic rate.

II. The client/caregiver can define hypothyroidism.

- A. Hypothyroidism is a disease resulting from a deficiency of thyroid hormones.
- B. Hypothyroidism can affect infants, children, and adults.
- C. Severe hypothyroidism is myxedema.

III. The client/caregiver can state possible causes of hypothyroidism.

- A. Congenital deficiency
- B. Tumors
- C. Inflammation of the thyroid
- D. Pituitary disease
- E. Surgical removal of thyroid
- F. Iodine deficiency
- G. Radioactive iodine treatment

IV. The client/caregiver can recognize signs and symptoms of hypothyroidism.

- A. Adults
 - Lethargy and fatigue
 - Forgetfulness
 - Weight gain
 - Dry, scaly skin
 - Puffy face and swollen around the eyes
 - Thinning and loss of hair
 - Hoarse voice
 - Constipation
 - Irregular menstrual periods or heavy flow

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- Increased sensitivity to cold
 - Hypersensitivity to drugs such as barbiturates and sedatives and to anesthesia
- B. Congenital hypothyroidism
 - Excessive sleeping and lack of energy
 - Greater risk for delayed mental development
 - Constipation or bloated abdomen
 - Puffy face and swollen tongue
 - Hoarse cry
 - Low muscle tone
 - Cold extremities
 - Increased birth weight, but little to no growth later

V. The client/caregiver can list measures for management symptoms of the disease.

- A. Exercise regularly with planned rest periods.
- B. Set realistic goals to increase activity as tolerated.
- C. Eat a diet that is low in sodium, cholesterol, fat, and calories.
- D. Avoid constipation with a diet high in fiber, adequate fluids, stool softeners, and so forth.
- E. Take thyroid medication as instructed at the same time each day (thyroid medication and laboratory testing must be taken lifelong).
- F. Contact physician before taking any over-the-counter medication (sedatives or hypnotics can cause respiratory depression).
- G. Keep follow-up appointments with physician.
- H. Provide a warm environment to promote comfort.
- I. Avoid pressure or irritation to the skin to prevent skin breakdown.
- J. Avoid excess stress, which increases metabolic rate.
- K. Use a Medic Alert bracelet or card.

(Continued)

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VI. The client/caregiver can list what signs and symptoms to report to physician.

- A. Signs/symptoms of hyperthyroidism are weight loss, restlessness, fast heart rate, fatigue, loose bowel movements, or heat intolerance (hyperthyroidism can be caused by hormone therapy).
- B. Signs/symptoms of hypothyroidism are a puffy, mask-like face and swelling around the eyes.
- C. Signs/symptoms of respiratory infections are fever, cough, and cold symptoms.
- D. Signs/symptoms of urinary infections are burning, frequency, and urgency.

VII. The client/caregiver is aware of signs and symptoms of possible complications.

- A. Enlarged heart and/or heart failure
- B. Organic psychosis
- C. Myxedema coma
- D. Intestinal obstruction
- E. Anemia

RESOURCES

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
www2.niddk.nih.gov/

American Thyroid Association
www.thyroid.org/

National Institutes of Health/Thyroid Disease
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/thyroiddiseases

Community support group

Dietician or nutritionist

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