



Annual Health Check Information for GPs

Thyroid Dysfunction

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Below is Down's syndrome specific information. The information is for GPs and is to be used alongside DSA's Adult Health Book.

Thyroid dysfunction in adults with Down's syndrome (DS) is common with its onset often occurring in childhood. In a study of 85 people with DS up to 25 years of age, 35% had hypothyroidism and 2% had hyperthyroidism. No gender difference was seen. Half of the patients with hypothyroidism acquired the condition before the age of 8 years, but only one of them displayed thyroid autoantibodies at diagnosis. Most who developed hypothyroidism after this age had thyroid autoantibodies. Hyperthyroidism in DS is usually due to Graves' disease and is characterised by a less severe clinical course with a higher remission rate following a course of anti-thyroid drug therapy and more frequent association with other autoimmune diseases. Thyroid disorders are often insidious with significant morbidity and subtle and non-specific symptoms and signs which may be mistakenly attributed to other illnesses. Consequently, annual screening for thyroid dysfunction for all adults with DS is recommended.

References

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- Vanderpump, M.P.J. & Tunbridge, W.M.G. (2008). *Thyroid disease: The Facts*. 4th edition. Oxford University Press.
- UK guidelines for the use of thyroid function tests. The Association of Clinical Biochemistry, British Thyroid Association and the British Thyroid Foundation (2006).*
http://www.british-thyroid-association.org/info-for-patients/Docs/TFT_guideline_final_version_July_2006.pdf

Further Information

- British Thyroid Association: <http://www.british-thyroid-association.org/>
- British Thyroid Foundation (for patients): <http://www.btf-thyroid.org/>
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The Down's Syndrome Association (DSA) is the only organisation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland which supports people with Down's syndrome at every stage of life.

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