# Increased Testing and Treatment for Hypothyroidism in Australia



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Hypothyroidism, an underactive thyroid condition, appears to be on the rise in Australia based on recent medical data. This glandular disorder affects approximately 4% of the population, predominantly impacting women and individuals over 40. The Clinical Chief of the Endocrine Society of Australia, Assoc Prof Shane Hamblin, notes the growing rates of thyroid function tests and prescriptions for levothyroxine, a synthetic thyroid hormone.

Medicare Australia reported an increase in thyroid function tests from 7.37 million in 2014 to nearly 9.9 million in 2023. Correspondingly, levothyroxine prescriptions rose from approximately 1.6 million to over 2 million within the same period. Despite this uptick, experts advise cautious assessment due to possible overdiagnosis and overtreatment risks. Subclinical hypothyroidism, manifested by elevated TSH levels with normal thyroid hormone, often doesn't necessitate immediate medication but should be monitored for any progression.

Predominantly triggered by Hashimoto’s thyroiditis, other causes include iodine balance issues, surgeries, and certain medications. While significant hypothyroidism remains rare, monitoring thyroid health is crucial, especially given similar symptoms stemming from various health conditions. Issues arise when asymptomatic patients undergo testing, consuming healthcare resources without substantial benefits. Thus, precise all-encompassing diagnoses and careful treatment planning are recommended.