

## Hypothyroidism...the silent disease

### Lake Rodarmel

Look around for a second and you may see people with visible disabilities. Perhaps a man with a prosthetic leg, a woman overcome with blindness, or even the visible sign of a disease such as cancer. When these ailments are obvious to us, it is easier to understand what a person may be struggling with. Many times, however, people are battling issues that we cannot see or understand, such as an autoimmune disease called hypothyroidism.

Hypothyroidism is a chronic condition in which the thyroid gland does not work properly. This condition is usually a lifelong illness. The thyroid gland affects many outward appearances. Weight gain is the main culprit, but often hair, skin, and nails are affected as well. There are also internal issues that a thyroid problem can cause. For example, anxiety, headaches, and fatigue are among those issues.

Hypothyroidism is detected through a blood test. Once the diagnosis is made, daily medication is required to maintain appropriate TSH levels in your body. Often, a specialist, called an Endocrinologist, will get involved with a treatment team. Frequent blood tests throughout the year are performed to make sure the medication is working. Many times the dosage needs to be adjusted according to the changes your body has made, so monitoring levels is important to staying healthy.

I was diagnosed with hypothyroidism in 8th grade. For years this condition went undiagnosed due to it not being common in young kids. I struggled with my weight even though I did not eat unhealthy or large amounts. I didn't understand why even though I was very active and involved in sports, I couldn't lose weight. I was very lethargic and the school nurse thought I had "mono" and wanted me to go to the doctors and have a blood test. After reviewing my symptoms, the doctor finally agreed to check my thyroid, and within a few hours, I was on medication and given an emergency appointment with a specialist.

Over the next few months I was carefully monitored and my life became more normal again. I wasn't tired, and by maintaining healthy habits, I lost the extra weight I couldn't lose before my diagnosis. I will forever be on daily medication and regular blood testing to keep my hypothyroidism in check. As a 17 year old, it is hard to take such an important medication every day, but I know that I have to and it is now just a part of my daily routine.

Hypothyroidism is a silent disease, I call it that because you can't see the ailments it creates for someone. With that being said, it is important to not judge people for their weight, hair loss, or even bad complexion because they may have underlying issues you are not aware of. Everyone has their own battles to fight and it is not our right to know everyone's business; it is just our job to be decent human beings and to be kind to others and nonjudgmental.