



Hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism is a disease in which the thyroid gland produces too much thyroid hormone and this is released into the blood. The main causes of hyperthyroidism are Graves' disease and toxic multinodular goiter or solitary toxic nodules.

Thyroiditis is a condition in which the thyroid is inflamed either by antibodies or a virus or a drug and the thyroid releases extra thyroid hormone into the blood. In Graves' disease the thyroid is overactive as a result of an antibody or protein, which is stimulating the thyroid (an autoimmune disease). The entire thyroid is usually enlarged and inflamed and the degree of hyperthyroidism can range from mild to very severe. In some people, cells affecting the muscle behind the eyes are also involved by the antibodies and they get bulging or inflamed eyes. In toxic multinodular goiter or solitary toxic nodule the nodules or lumps on the thyroid are producing extra thyroid hormone. Symptoms of hyperthyroidism may include racing heart, weight loss, sweating, increased hunger, anxiety, or trouble sleeping. When severe this condition can be very dangerous as it can cause an irregular heartbeat or a stroke or a very serious illness called thyroid storm.

The types of hyperthyroidism are differentiated by history, physical examination, blood tests, ultrasound and/or a radioiodine scan. It typically requires the expertise of an endocrinologist to distinguish among the above conditions and offer the appropriate management.

Treatment of Graves' disease may include an oral medication called methimazole, beta blocker medications to slow the heart rate, a radioiodine treatment or surgery to remove the thyroid gland. Toxic nodules are treated either with surgery or with



radioiodine. Thyroiditis conditions are transient and usually only require supportive treatment. Choosing a treatment requires careful discussion of the pros and cons of each treatment and involvement of the patient in the decision-making. Dr. Brett will ensure that the proper diagnosis is made and help you choose the best treatment for your hyperthyroid condition.