

Thyroid Screen (TSH)

The thyroid-stimulating hormone test, or TSH, is a blood test used to detect problems affecting the thyroid gland. Altered levels of TSH in the blood may occur in a person exhibiting symptoms of a thyroid disorder, including hyperthyroidism or hypothyroidism.

What is TSH?

TSH is a hormone produced by the pituitary gland, a small organ located below the brain and behind the sinus cavities. TSH stimulates the thyroid gland, which is a gland in the neck, to release the hormones thyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3) into the blood. These thyroid hormones help control the rate at which the body uses energy. If the release of these hormones is not properly regulated by the body, a person may experience hyperthyroidism (too much T4 and T3), or hypothyroidism (not enough T4 and T3).

What are the symptoms of hyperthyroidism?

A person with elevated levels of T4 and T3 hormones may exhibit one or more of the following symptoms:

- Rapid heart rate
- Hand tremors
- Nervousness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Weight loss
- Irritated eyes

What are the symptoms of hypothyroidism?

A person with low levels of T4 and T3 hormones may exhibit one or more of the following symptoms:

- Weight gain
- Constipation
- Dry skin
- Cold intolerance
- Fatigue
- Hair loss

What should I do if the results are abnormal or out of range?

It is always recommended you meet with a healthcare provider to determine what your laboratory test results mean to you. Your healthcare provider will review all of your test results and, combined with your health history, will be able to provide an accurate course of action.

If your results were high: If your results were abnormally high, it may indicate an underactive thyroid gland or a problem with the pituitary gland.

If your results were low: If your results were abnormally low, it may indicate an overactive thyroid gland or damage to the pituitary gland.

Whether your results are high or low, an abnormal TSH indicates an excess or deficiency in the amount of thyroid hormone available to the body, but it does not indicate the reason. As with any abnormal results, it's important that you discuss your results with your healthcare provider.

What other resources are available to learn more about my health and laboratory tests?

- American Thyroid Association: thyroid.org
- Lab Tests Online: labtestsonline.org
- WebMD: webmd.com

DLO Direct offers direct access to laboratory testing for informational purposes. A DLO Direct lab test result is not a medical diagnosis and is not intended as medical advice. Only a healthcare provider can interpret lab results and diagnose a medical condition or disease.

Because tests have not been ordered by a healthcare provider, third party entities, including Medicare and Medicaid, will not reimburse for these tests.



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