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# Low-priced medication for underactive thyroid

**INSOMNIA**, hair fall, dry and cracked skin, hunger, weight loss or weight gain, all these symptoms are clues to the disease known as hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid). The disorder affects women more than men and is considered to be one of the main causes of mental disability in infants.

The thyroid gland secretes thyroid hormones that affect many vital body functions such as the heart rate, the respiratory rate, the rate at which calories are burned, skin maintenance, growth, heat production, fertility, and digestion.

The Ministry of Health and Population recently approved a new drug to treat hypothyroidism which contains levothyroxine sodium. This means that Egyptian patients will have access to the most up-to-date treatment for thyroid disorders; but they should take the therapeutic dose that is prescribed for them, no more and no less. The new drug, which is produced by a German pharmaceutical company that is work-

ing in Egypt, is much less expensive than the old drugs.

Physicians attending a press conference in Cairo recently, noted that the new drug that has been approved for the treatment of underactive thyroid, would contribute to eliminating the smuggling of medicines to treat the disease, on the local market, at very high prices.

According to Professor of Internal Medicine at Cairo University, Mohamed Khatab, thyroid gland disorders are prevalent among women and older people. He confirmed that the thyroid gland affects the body's vital functions. He added that the symptoms range between feelings of imbalance to full coma. Patients may complain of fatigue, increased sensitivity to cold, constipation, dry skin, weight gain, puffy face, muscle weakness, aches and tenderness, joint pain, an elevated blood cholesterol level, heavier than normal or irregular menstrual periods, falling hair and impaired memory.

Dr Hisham el-Gayar, Professor of Endocrinology at Ain Shams

University, said that insufficient secretion of thyroid gland hormones is common among women and older people and it affects the various systems of the body. In infants, the disease leads to shortness of stature and a delay in mental development. Dr el-Gayar stressed the importance of early detection and diagnosis of the disease, so that the Egyptian patients could receive the medication they needed, at the correct dose.

Since the thyroid gland hormones are associated with the growth of the different body systems, Dr el-Gayar urged parents, teachers and even social insurance clinics, to keep track of the growth of children and to run thyroid gland tests for them, if they notice any abnormal change. Dr Emad Greis, representative of the company producing the new drug, noted that the company had exerted every effort to counter the spread of medicines whose sources are unknown, by providing the local market with high quality original products, at a low price.

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