

PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS- ANTITHYROID DRUGS

Antithyroid drugs have been in use since the early 1940's and represent one of the three major forms of treatment for hyperthyroidism which are in current use. The two drugs in use in the USA are propylthiouracil (PTU) and methimazole (Tapazole). Both drugs act to prevent the thyroid from manufacturing thyroid hormone. The gradual return of thyroid hormone level in the blood to normal relieves the patient of the symptoms of hyperthyroidism.

DRUG REACTIONS:

1) Antithyroid drugs can cause allergic reactions in about 5% of patients. The most common reaction is skin rash and/or hives. Less commonly, the pills may cause fever, joint pain, or liver disease. Signs of liver disease include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, yellowing of the skin (jaundice), lightening of the stools, and darkening of the urine. Call your doctor if you develop these symptoms.

2) A serious reaction called agranulocytosis, which occurs in only one out of 300 patients, is a decrease in the white cell count leading to susceptibility of infection. Therefore, if you develop a rash, itching, hives, joint pain, fever or sore throat, stop taking the drug and call your doctor **THAT DAY**. If indicated, the doctor may recommend another form of treatment. The doctor may also order a blood test called a white cell count. If your white cell count is low, the doctor will follow it carefully through periodic checks until you are healthy again.

3) Too much antithyroid drugs can lower the production of thyroid hormone below normal over time and cause *hypothyroidism*. Therefore, take your medication in the doses prescribed. Call your doctor if you begin to feel tired, listless, or feel chilly when others around you are comfortably warm