



MINERVA

Periorbital oedema caused by profound primary hypothyroidism

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An older woman presented with marked periorbital oedema, thickened skin, coarsened facial features, and brittle hair (typical myxoedema appearances) (fig 1); she also described intolerance of cold and hoarsening of her voice.



Her thyroid stimulating hormone levels were raised at 47.2 mIU/L (reference range 0.3-5.0 mIU/L) and T4 markedly

reduced at <3.2 pmol/L (reference range 7.9-16 pmol/L), confirming primary hypothyroidism.

Such marked oedema is unusual but is resolved with levothyroxine.

Use levothyroxine cautiously; it may induce angina, atrial fibrillation, and/or adrenal crisis in patients with underlying heart disease¹ and/or adrenal insufficiency.²

Periorbital swelling can also be caused by infection, allergy, skin disorders, heart failure, and renal failure.

Patient consent obtained.

1 Bestpractice.bmj.com. 2019. Primary hypothyroidism—symptoms, diagnosis and treatment <https://bestpractice.bmj.com/topics/en-gb/535>.

2 Bestpractice.bmj.com. 2019. Central hypothyroidism—symptoms, diagnosis and treatment. <https://bestpractice.bmj.com/topics/en-gb/36>.

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