

Thyroid Health

Keep your body in balance by taking care of your thyroid health.



What is Thyroid Health?

Sometimes there is a subtle sense of imbalance in the body. It may be a feeling of fatigue that won't go away, even after a full night's rest. Or maybe it's feeling depressed or anxious without reasonable cause. Weight management may suddenly become an issue, even when diet and exercise stay consistent. All of these symptoms can point to a thyroid disorder.

The thyroid produces thyroid hormone, which regulates body temperature, metabolism and heart rate, among many other vital functions in the body. Imbalances occur when the thyroid produces too little or too much hormone, resulting in unpleasant symptoms and increased risk of other health complications. There are different types of thyroid disorders, but hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism are the most common. Fortunately, proper diagnosis and treatment can manage thyroid disorders. However, it is important to understand thyroid conditions to help avoid problems and live a normal, healthy life.



When your thyroid is producing the right balance of hormones, it's regulating body temperature, metabolism, heart rate and many other vital functions.



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What can I do for thyroid health?

A holistic approach to thyroid treatment offers the best results.

- Diet and lifestyle changes can greatly help thyroid health.
- While coffee and candy are often sought to reduce thyroid-related fatigue, avoid or eliminate caffeine and sugar. Instead, go for healthy energy with proteins like nuts and organic animal products. Protein transports thyroid hormone to all tissues of the body, and can help normalize thyroid function.

- Eliminate intake of grains and refined carbohydrates, which increase estrogen and negatively affect the thyroid. Healthy fats can balance hormones, including coconut oil, avocado, wild salmon, chia, flaxseeds and hemp seeds.
- Since stress can play a role, exercise regularly and adopt practices such as meditation and yoga to relieve stress.
- Medications and hormone replacement therapy are often recommended to stabilize thyroid hormone levels. There are also natural options available such as bio-identical hormone replacement therapy, with fewer risk of side effects.

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Take Action to Support a Healthy Thyroid:

Each week check off every action you take to improve your thyroid health and keep score. Make it your goal to add more each week. Notice and journal how you feel. It can give you the momentum to keep going.

Action Items	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Avoid or eliminate caffeine. Try dandelion root or herbal teas as a substitute.								
Eliminate sugar								
Eat healthy nut proteins								
Increase nutrients for thyroid support such as chromium, iodine, selenium								
Switch to organic meat products								
Eat 5-8 cups of non-starchy vegetables per day								
Eliminate grains and refined carbohydrates								
Add a healthy fat such as: coconut oil, avocado, wild salmon, chia seeds, flax seeds or hemp seeds								
Get 8 hours of sleep								
Avoid gluten, and be careful not to substitute with over-processed, gluten-free foods.								
Meditate for 15 minutes								
Attend a yoga class								
Weekly Score								

Five things to know about Thyroid Health:

1. Thyroid disorders are common but often misdiagnosed. Approximately 20 million Americans suffer from some form of thyroid disorder, according to the American Thyroid Association. However, up to 60% are unaware they have a thyroid issue, or have been misdiagnosed because the symptoms often coincide with other conditions. Lab tests may even come back normal when a doctor only screens with a thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) test. For more accurate diagnosis, ask for Free T3 and Free T4 tests as well. Additional checks for thyroid antibodies can further help determine the presence of an autoimmune thyroid disorder, as reported by the American Thyroid Association.

2. Women are more likely than men to have thyroid disorders. The American Thyroid Association estimates that one in eight women will develop a thyroid disorder at some point during her lifetime. Imbalances are especially common right after pregnancy and menopause, according to information from the Office on Women's Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In many cases, thyroid problems are mistaken for menopause symptoms.

3. Stress may contribute to thyroid disorders. While stress may not actually cause thyroid disorders, it can certainly aggravate an existing one. When stressed, the body releases the hormone cortisol. When chronically stressed, this continuous release of cortisol causes the thyroid to work harder to produce sufficient amounts of thyroid hormone. Further, stress makes the body more prone to autoimmune thyroid conditions such as Hashimoto's thyroiditis, according to a study in the journal *Thyroid*. Genetics, an autoimmune attack, removal of the thyroid gland, nutritional deficiencies or toxins in the environment can also contribute to thyroid imbalances.

4. Symptoms vary greatly between hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism. If the thyroid is sluggish, it produces too little thyroid hormone, known as underactive thyroid, or hypothyroidism. Too much hormone production leads to an overactive thyroid, or hyperthyroidism. Hypothyroidism is far more common and can include symptoms such as fatigue, unexplained weight gain, constipation, dry skin and hair, hair loss, muscle aches and weakness, heavy or irregular menstrual periods, depression and cold intolerance. Hyperthyroidism, which causes processes in the body to speed up, can include symptoms such as heart palpitations or rapid heartbeat, anxiety and nervousness, weightloss, heat intolerance, muscle weakness, trouble sleeping and light or skipped periods.

5. Untreated thyroid issues can be deadly. While symptoms may initially be mild, left undiagnosed and untreated, hypothyroidism is associated with an increased risk of heart disease, according to WebMD. This is because high levels of LDL cholesterol — the "bad" cholesterol — can occur in people with an underactive thyroid, possibly progressing to heart failure. Advanced hypothyroidism, though rare, can also be life-threatening. Hyperthyroidism also carries similar increased risk of cardiac problems, along with greater risk of hypertension. Eye problems and vision loss are also risks of untreated hyperthyroidism, according to Mayo Clinic. Further, the rates of thyroid cancer in both women and men have been increasing in recent years, according to the American Cancer Society. However, the most common types of thyroid cancer are very treatable and often curable.

