



FROM THE SPAMEC HEALTH CONCERNS COMMITTEE

Right above your collarbone, sits a butterfly-shaped gland called the thyroid. It is one of your body's endocrine glands that produce hormones that control numerous bodily processes. When the thyroid produces either too little or too much thyroid hormone, dysfunction results that impairs the healthy functioning of important organs.

More than 12 percent of people living in the United States will develop a thyroid condition at some time in their lives. Up to 60% of the 20 million Americans who have thyroid disease may not know they have the condition. Thyroid diseases are the most common endocrine disorders worldwide. If left untreated over time, thyroid dysfunction can result in obesity, joint pain, infertility, heart disease, excessive tiredness, sleep disorders, changes in mental health, (depression, feeling down, anxiety), inability to tolerate heat and cold, infertility, diarrhea, or constipation, rapid weight loss, weight gain along with a possible increase in cholesterol levels, an unusually fast heartbeat, trembling of the hands, (inability to keep them steady), changes to skin, hair and nails (thinning, becoming more brittle), base of the neck swelling, hoarse voice, difficulty remembering things.

All ages are affected by this condition; however, women are more prone to get it than males. Disorders of the thyroid gland involve underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism), overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism), thyroid swelling (goiter), and benign and malignant (cancerous) nodules of the thyroid gland. Each thyroid type has its own set of symptoms.

Medical professionals carry out thyroid tests to assess how well your thyroid is functioning and detect any problems. Your doctor will recommend you test for three thyroid hormones such as Thyroxine (T4), triiodothyronine (T3), and stimulating thyroid hormone (TSH). Sometimes thyroid antibody tests are also advised to be taken. For these tests, your healthcare provider may draw blood from your arms and send it to a lab for testing. Some imaging tests like ultrasound and thyroid scans also detect thyroid diseases and their causes. It is important to check for thyroid disease if you have any symptoms because most of your body's organs are impacted by thyroid hormones.

Even if you are symptom-free, you should be aware of potential warning signals so that you can seek medical attention as soon as possible. And if you are diagnosed with thyroid disease, starting therapy immediately increases your chances of leading a healthy life.

To reduce the effects of thyroid disease and support its management:

- Eat a well-balanced diet (avoid processed foods packed with sugar and preservatives, dyes, or fat- and sugar-free substitutes). Eating cruciferous veggies such as cauliflower, cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, watercress, bok choy, and brussels sprouts **raw** in high doses could mess with your thyroid. Uncooked cruciferous vegetables contain natural chemicals called goitrogens (goiter producers) that can interfere with thyroid hormone synthesis. However, the goitrogens in these foods are inactivated by cooking, or even by light steaming. Aim for four to five servings of vegetables and three to four servings of fruit daily, along with plenty of lean proteins and fatty fish, such as salmon, herring, anchovies, and mackerel. Use extra-virgin olive oil, expeller-pressed organic canola oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil, coconut oil, nuts, nut butters, and avocados for healthy fats.
- Limit your intake of soy
- Maintain a healthy sleep routine
- Get some sunlight each day
- Exercise regularly
- Ask for a thyroid collar when you get an X-ray
- Manage stress; practice relaxation (yoga, meditation, breathing exercises, taking a nap, going for a walk, taking a warm bath, etc.)
- Avoid smoking or drinking alcohol
- Ingest whole carbohydrates, proteins, and vitamins
- Visit your doctor regularly