

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



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Thyroid Problems - The Basics



The thyroid gland influences almost all of the metabolic processes in your body. Thyroid disorders can range from a small, harmless goiter (enlarged gland) that needs no treatment, to life-threatening cancer. The most common thyroid problems involve abnormal production of thyroid hormones.

Too much of these vital body chemicals results in a condition known as **hyperthyroidism**. Insufficient hormone production leads to **hypothyroidism**. Although the effects can be unpleasant or uncomfortable, most thyroid problems can be managed well if properly diagnosed and treated.

What Causes Thyroid Problems?

All types of **hyperthyroidism** are due to an overproduction of thyroid hormones, but the condition can occur in several ways:

- **Graves' disease:** The production of too much thyroid hormone.
- **Toxic adenomas:** Nodules



develop in the thyroid gland and begin to secrete thyroid hormones, upsetting the body's chemical balance; some goiters may contain several of these nodules.

- **Subacute thyroiditis:** inflammation of the thyroid causes the gland to "leak" excess hormones, resulting in temporary hyperthyroidism that generally lasts a few weeks but may persist for months.
- **Pituitary gland malfunctions or cancerous growths in the thyroid gland:** Although rare, hyperthyroidism can also develop from these causes.

Hypothyroidism, by contrast, stems from an underproduction of thyroid hormones. Since your body's energy production requires certain amounts of thyroid hormones, a drop in hormone production leads to lower energy levels. Causes of hypothyroidism include these:

- **Hashimoto's thyroiditis:** In this autoimmune disorder, the body attacks thyroid tissue. The tissue eventually dies and stops producing hormones.

(Over)

Thyroid Problems, The Basics . . . (Continued)

- **Removal of the thyroid gland:** The thyroid may be surgically removed or chemically destroyed as treatment for hyperthyroidism.
- **Exposure to excessive amounts of iodide:** Cold and sinus medicines, the heart medicine amiodarone, or certain contrast dyes given before some X-rays may expose you to too much iodine. You may be at greater risk for developing

hypothyroidism, especially if you have had thyroid problems in the past.

- **Lithium:** This drug has also been linked as a cause of hypothyroidism.

Untreated for long periods of time, hypothyroidism can bring on a myxedema coma, a rare but potentially fatal condition that requires immediate hormone injections.

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pleasant or uncomfortable, most thyroid problems can be managed well if properly diagnosed and treated.

Source: WebMD.com.

Food and Diet Tips to Keep Your Mood Stable

Besides carbohydrates, studies indicate that many other foods -- along with healthful eating habits -- may help our moods and somewhat ease depression.

- **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Population studies show that people who infrequently eat fish, which is high in omega-3 fatty acids, are more likely to suffer depression. So add foods rich in omega-3s to your diet. Good sources of omega-3 fatty acids include fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, and sardines. Other good food sources include flaxseed, nuts, and dark, green leafy vegetables.
- **Vitamin B-12:** Studies also indicate that people who eat diets low in vitamin B-12 may be at higher risk of depression. Good food sources of vitamin B-12 include lean and low-fat animal products, such as fish and low-fat dairy foods.
- **Selenium:** Preliminary small studies indicate that selenium may help improve mild depression. Although more research is needed, many foods rich in selenium are healthy regardless of your mood. It can't hurt to add these to your diet: seafood, nuts, lean meat, whole grains, beans, and low-fat dairy.

Frequent small meals: Eating frequent, small meals of healthy foods helps keep your blood sugar levels even, avoiding diet-related mood swings. Eat a small meal or snack every three to four hours to give you sustained energy and keep your blood sugar stable. Source: WebMD.com.

Benefits Corner

REMINDER

As a member of the County Health Pool, you have a right to appeal denial of coverage. There is an appeal process that has a specific procedure/timeline that must be followed.

The appeal process is outlined in the CHP Plan Document that can be found at www.ctsi.org

On the left side bar under The Pools, click on County Health Pool, next page click on link "click here for useful documents", then find the link for the Plan Document.