My Drift

Title: Thyroid Gland

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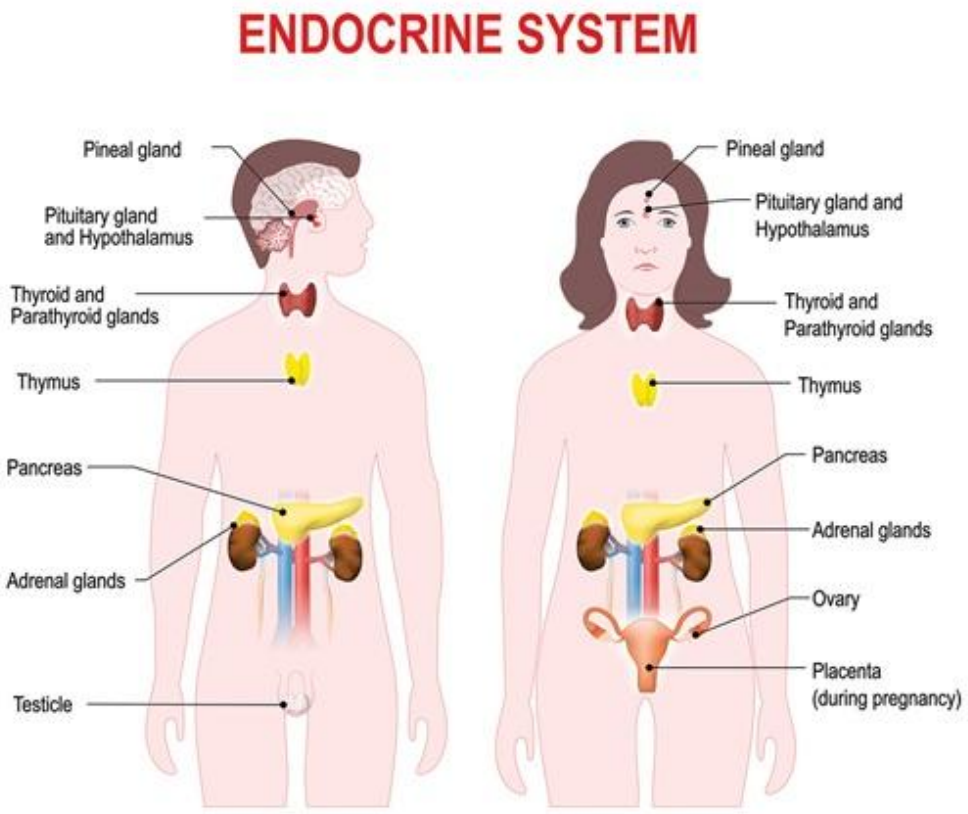
Date: 30 Apr 2026
Article Number: (530-2026-13)

Before I discuss the Human Thyroid Gland in detail, I need to point out that the Thyroid Gland is just one gland in the Endocrine System.



The endocrine system is a complex network of glands and organs that produce, store, and release hormones directly into the bloodstream to regulate vital bodily processes. These chemical messengers control metabolism, growth, reproduction, sleep, and mood. The system works with the nervous system to maintain homeostasis.

Homeostasis is the body's automatic process of maintaining a stable, balanced internal environment, even when outside conditions change. It acts like a built-in thermostat, regulating temperature, sugar, and water levels to keep the body functioning properly.

Key Organs and Glands

Hypothalamus: The brain region linking the nervous and endocrine systems.
Pituitary Gland: The "master gland" controlling other glands.
Thyroid Gland: Controls metabolism.
Adrenal Glands: Produces adrenaline and cortisol for stress response.
Pancreas: Regulates blood sugar using insulin and glucagon.
Reproductive Glands: Ovaries (estrogen/progesterone) and Testes (testosterone).
Pineal Gland: Regulates sleep cycles.
Parathyroid Glands: Regulates calcium levels.

Primary Functions

Metabolism Regulation: Controlling energy levels and metabolic rate.
Growth and Development: Managing growth spurts and maturation.
Reproduction: Regulating sexual function, puberty, and fertility.
Homeostasis: Maintaining stable internal conditions like blood pressure and sugar levels.

Hormones and Mechanisms

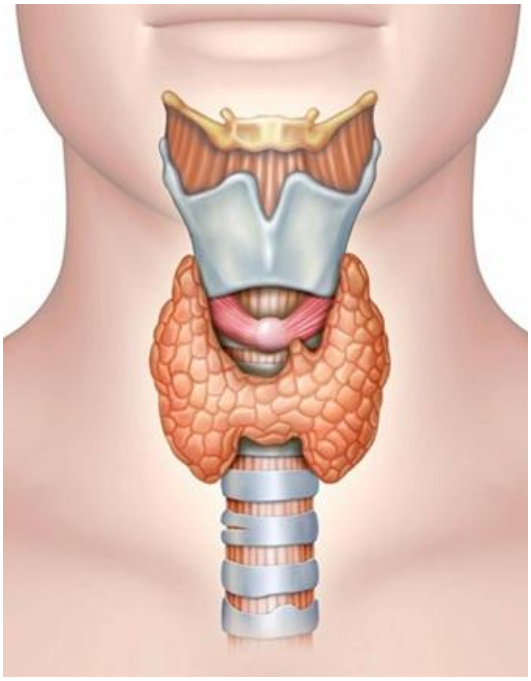
Hormones are transported via the blood to target cells equipped with specific receptors, allowing them to exert effects far from the gland of origin.
Insulin/Glucagon: Manages blood sugar.
Cortisol/Adrenaline: Manages stress.
Thyroxine: Controls metabolism.

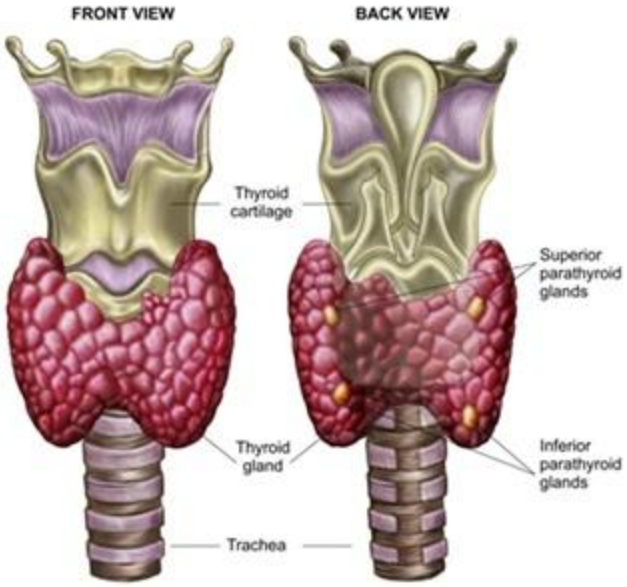
Common Endocrine Diseases

Diseases often result from hormone imbalances (too much or too little) or dysfunction in gland operation.
Diabetes: Pancreas dysfunction causing high blood sugar.
Thyroid Disorders: Hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism.
Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS): Hormone imbalance in women.
Adrenal insufficiency/Cushing's syndrome: Adrenal dysfunction.

Human Thyroid Gland

The human thyroid gland is a butterfly-shaped endocrine gland located at the base of the neck, below the Adam's apple. It regulates metabolism, heart rate, temperature, and energy levels by producing hormones, mainly (thyroxine) and (triiodothyronine), which affect nearly every cell in the body. It requires iodine to function properly.





Key Anatomical and Functional Features

Structure: Comprised of two lobes on either side of the windpipe (trachea) connected by a narrow bridge of tissue called the isthmus.
Location: Found in the lower front of the neck, surrounding the trachea.
Mechanism: Stimulated by TSH (thyroid-stimulating hormone) from the pituitary gland to release hormones into the bloodstream.
Cell Types: Follicular cells produce Thyroxine (T4) and Triiodothyronine (T3); parafollicular cells (C-cells) produce calcitonin, which helps manage calcium levels.

Common Thyroid Disorders

Thyroid dysfunction occurs when the gland produces too much or too little hormone, which affects around one in 20 people.
Hypothyroidism (Underactive): The gland produces too few hormones, causing slow metabolism, fatigue, weight gain, and feeling cold.
Hyperthyroidism (Overactive): The gland produces too many hormones, resulting in fast metabolism, weight loss, anxiety, and rapid heartbeat.
Other Conditions: Include goiter (enlargement), nodules (lumps), and cancer.

Key Functions

Metabolic Rate: Controls how fast the body consumes energy.
Development: Crucial for brain development in fetuses and children.

Body Regulation: **Affects heart rate, digestion, skin health, and muscle strength.**

The above information is mostly the Google AI Overview. Now we are going to see what the Cleveland Clinic, Endocrinologists, medical researchers, and other experts have to say about our Thyroid Gland.

Thyroid

Your thyroid is an important endocrine gland that makes and releases certain hormones. Your thyroid's main job is to control your metabolism — how your body uses energy. Sometimes, your thyroid doesn't work properly. These conditions are common and treatable.

What is the thyroid?

Your thyroid is a small, butterfly-shaped gland located at the front of your neck under your skin. It's a part of your endocrine system and controls many of your body's important functions by producing and releasing (secreting) certain hormones. Your thyroid's main job is to control the speed of your metabolism (metabolic rate), which is the process of how your body transforms the food you consume into energy. All of the cells in your body need energy to function.

When your thyroid isn't working properly, it can impact your entire body.

What does my thyroid do?

As an endocrine gland, your thyroid makes and secretes hormones. Your thyroid produces and releases the following hormones:

- **Thyroxine (T4): This is the primary hormone your thyroid makes and releases. Although your thyroid makes the most of this hormone, it doesn't have much of an effect on your metabolism. Once your thyroid releases T4 into your bloodstream, it can convert to T3 through a process called deiodination.**
- **Triiodothyronine (T3): Your thyroid produces lesser amounts of T3 than T4, but it has a much greater effect on your metabolism than T4.**
- **Reverse triiodothyronine (RT3): Your thyroid makes very small amounts of RT3, which reverses the effects of T3.**
- **Calcitonin: This hormone helps regulate the amount of calcium in your blood.**

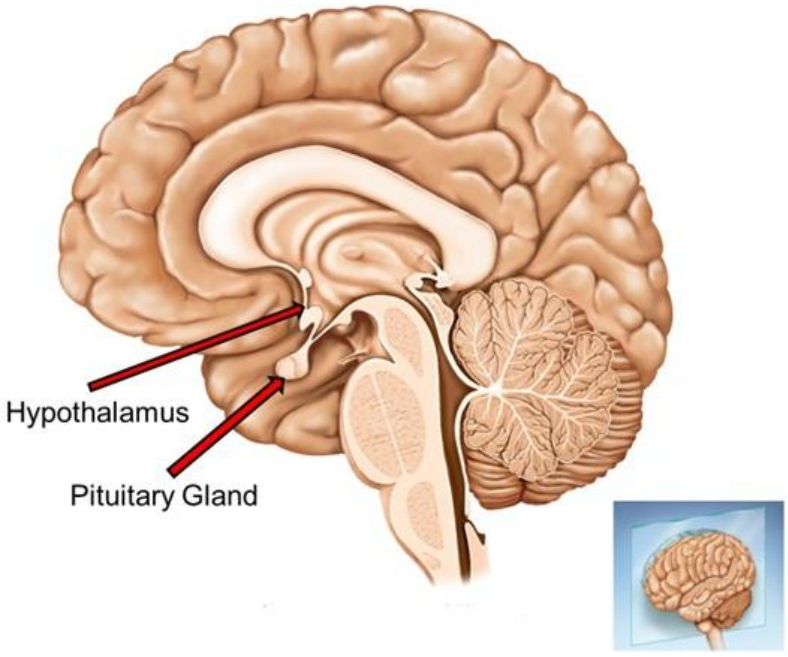
In order to make thyroid hormones, your thyroid gland needs iodine, an element found in food (most commonly in iodized table salt) and water. Your thyroid gland traps iodine and transforms it into thyroid hormones. If you have too little or too much iodine in your body, it can affect the level of hormones your thyroid makes and releases.

Your thyroid hormones affect the following bodily functions:

- **How your body uses energy (metabolism).**
- **Heart rate.**
- **Breathing.**
- **Digestion.**
- **Body temperature.**
- **Brain development.**
- **Mental activity.**
- **Skin and bone maintenance.**
- **Fertility.**

What other organs and glands interact with the thyroid?

Your body has a complex system for controlling the level of thyroid hormones in your body. First, your hypothalamus (a part of your brain located on the undersurface of it) secretes thyroid-releasing hormone (TRH), which stimulates a part of your pituitary gland to secrete thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH). TSH then stimulates your thyroid follicular cells to release thyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3) if there are adequate levels of iodine in your body.



Your thyroid gland and its hormones affect almost every organ system of your body, including:

- **Your cardiovascular system: Your thyroid helps regulate the amount of blood your heart pumps through your circulatory system (cardiac output), heart rate and strength and vigor of your heart's contraction (contractility of the heart).**
- **Your nervous system: When your thyroid isn't working properly, it can cause symptoms that affect your nervous system, including numbness, tingling, pain or a sense of burning in the affected parts of your body. In addition, hypothyroidism can cause depression and hyperthyroidism can cause anxiety.**
- **Your digestive system: Your thyroid is involved with how food moves through your digestive system (gastrointestinal motility).**
- **Your reproductive system: If your thyroid isn't working properly, it can cause irregular menstrual periods and issues with fertility.**

Can a person live without a thyroid?

Yes, you can live without your thyroid. However, you'll need to take hormone replacement medication for the rest of your life in order to stay healthy and prevent certain side effects and symptoms. Thyroid removal surgery, known as a thyroidectomy, is a common surgery that can treat certain thyroid conditions.

What are the parts of the thyroid?

There are two main parts of your thyroid: the two halves (lobes) and the middle of the thyroid that connects the two lobes (thyroid isthmus).

Your thyroid is made of thyroid follicle cells (thyrocytes), which create and store thyroid hormone (mainly T3 and T4), and C-cells, which secrete the hormone calcitonin.

How big is the thyroid?

Your thyroid is about 2 inches long. A healthy thyroid usually does not stick out from your throat, and you can't see it by looking at your neck.

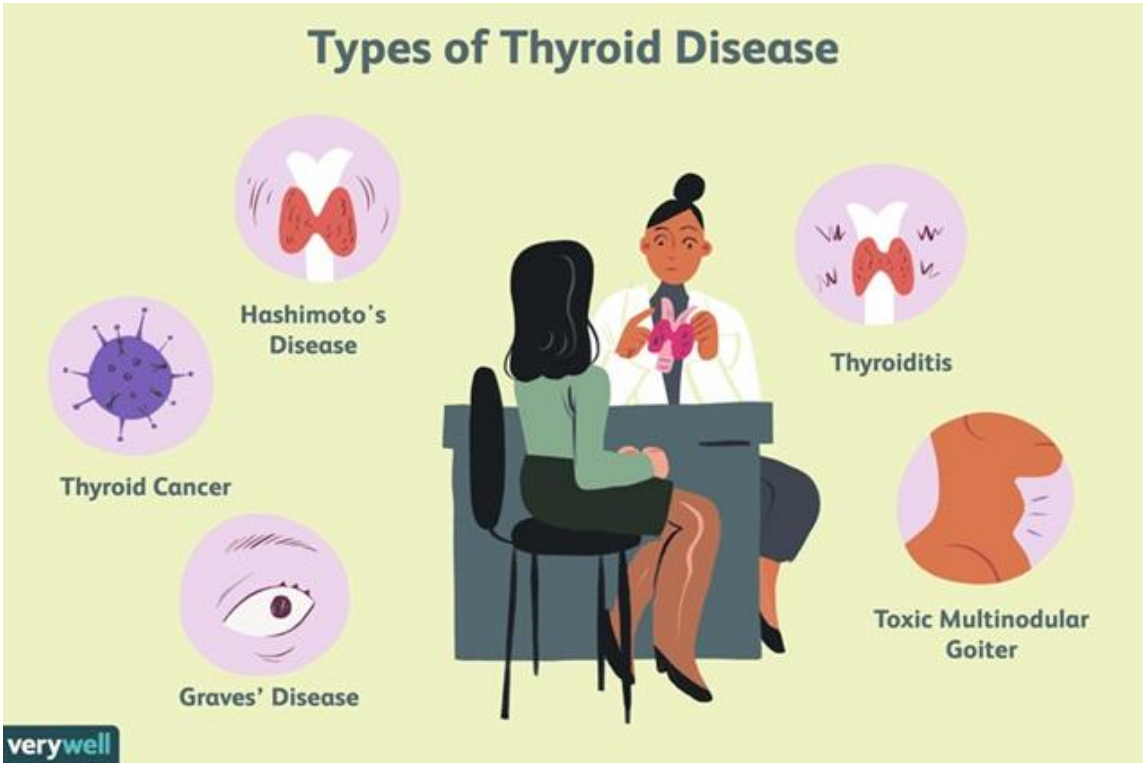
Conditions and Disorders

What conditions and disorders affect the thyroid?

There are several different types of thyroid disease. Thyroid disease is very common, with an estimated 20 million people in the United States having some type of thyroid disorder. Females are about five to eight times more likely to be diagnosed with a thyroid condition.

Thyroid diseases are split into two types: primary and secondary.

In primary thyroid disease, the disease originates in your thyroid gland. In secondary thyroid disease, the disease originates in your pituitary gland. As an example, if you have a nodule on your thyroid that's releasing excess amounts of thyroid hormones, it would be called primary hyperthyroidism. If a tumor in your pituitary gland is releasing excess amounts of thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), which then stimulates your thyroid to produce excess thyroid hormones, it would be called secondary hyperthyroidism.



The four main conditions that affect your thyroid include:

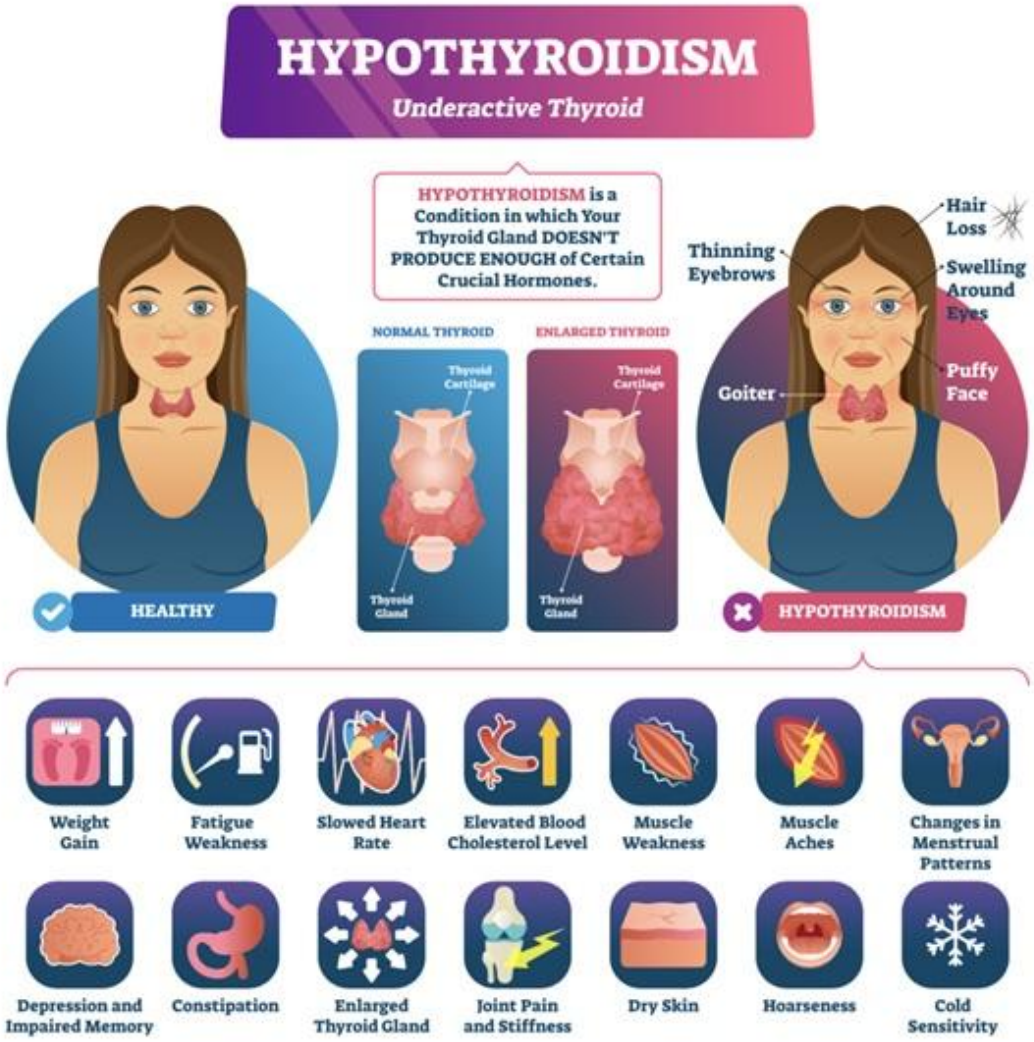
- **Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid).**
- **Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid).**
- **Goiter (enlarged thyroid).**
- **Thyroid cancer.**

Hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) happens when your thyroid doesn't produce and release enough thyroid hormones. This causes aspects of your metabolism to slow down. It's a fairly common condition that affects approximately 10 million people in the United States. It is treatable.

Causes of hypothyroidism include:

- **Hashimoto's disease, an autoimmune disease.**
- **Thyroiditis (inflammation of the thyroid).**
- **Iodine deficiency.**
- **A nonfunctioning thyroid gland (when the thyroid doesn't work correctly from birth).**
- **Over-treatment of hyperthyroidism through medication.**
- **Thyroid gland removal.**

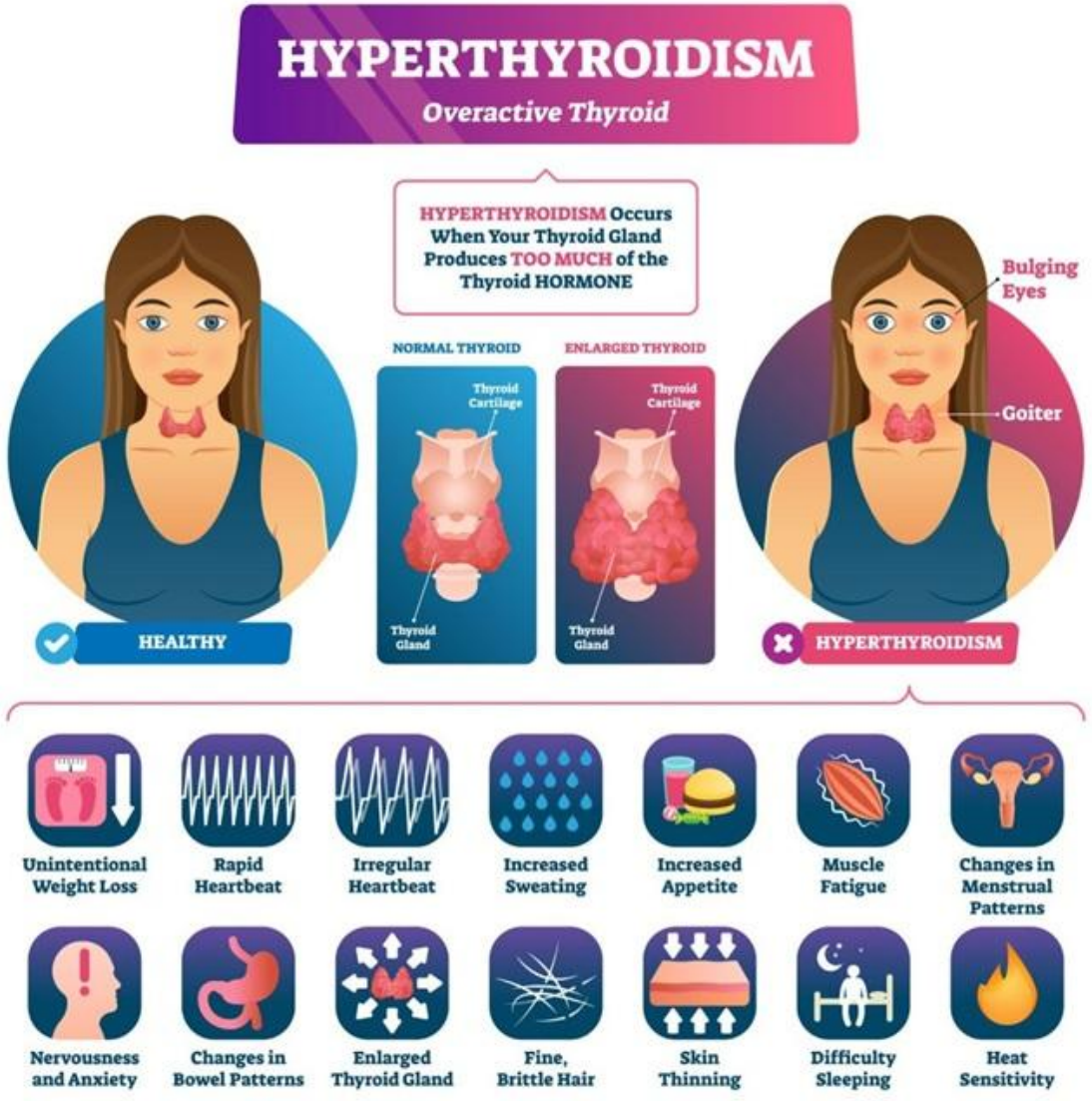


Hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid) happens when your thyroid produces and releases more thyroid hormones than your body needs. This causes aspects of your metabolism to speed up. Approximately 1 out of 100 people over the age of 12 have hyperthyroidism in the United States. It is treatable.

Causes of hyperthyroidism include:

- **Graves' disease, an autoimmune condition.**
- **Thyroid nodules.**
- **Thyroiditis (inflammation of the thyroid).**
- **Postpartum thyroiditis (inflammation of the thyroid that happens after giving birth).**
- **Excess iodine in your blood from diet and/or medication.**
- **Over-treatment of hypothyroidism through medication.**
- **A benign (noncancerous) tumor in your pituitary gland.**

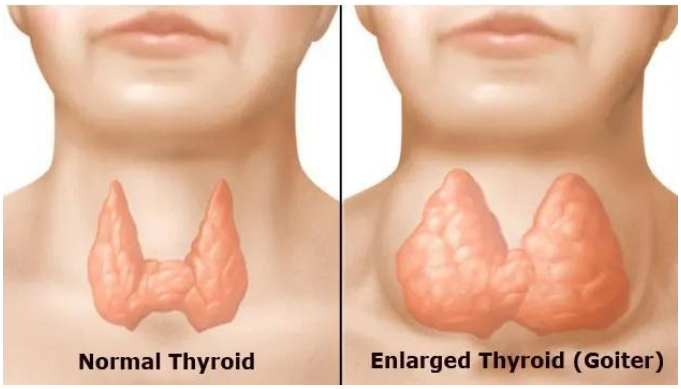


Goiter

Goiter is an enlargement of your thyroid gland. Goiters are relatively common; they affect approximately 5% of people in the United States

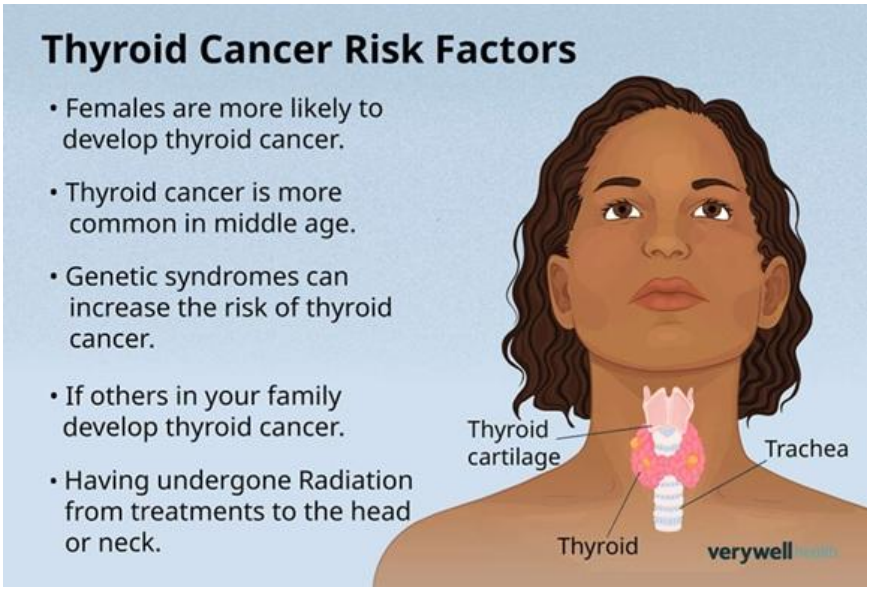
Goiters have different causes, depending on their type.

- **Simple goiters:** These goiters develop when your thyroid gland doesn't make enough hormones to meet your body's needs. Your thyroid gland tries to make up for the shortage by growing larger.
- **Endemic goiters:** These goiters occur in people who don't get enough iodine in their diet (iodine is necessary to make thyroid hormone). Iodine is added to table salt in the United States and several other countries, so people who live in those countries usually don't get endemic goiters.
- **Sporadic goiters:** These goiters have no known cause in most cases. In some cases, certain medications, such as lithium, can cause sporadic goiters.



Thyroid cancer

Thyroid cancer is cancer that begins in your thyroid tissues. Approximately 53,000 people in the United States receive a diagnosis of thyroid cancer every year. Treatments for most thyroid cancers are very successful.



Thyroid cancer is classified based on the type of cells from which cancer grows. Thyroid cancer types include:

- **Papillary: Up to 80% of all thyroid cancer cases are papillary.**
- **Follicular: Follicular thyroid cancer accounts for up to 15% of thyroid cancer diagnoses.**
- **Medullary: About 2% of thyroid cancer cases are medullary. It's often caused by gene mutation.**
- **Anaplastic: About 2% of thyroid cancer cases are anaplastic.**

What are the early warning signs and symptoms of thyroid problems?

Different thyroid conditions have different symptoms. However, since your thyroid has a large role in certain body systems and processes, such as heart rate, metabolism and temperature control, there are certain symptoms to look out for that could be a sign of a thyroid condition, including:

- **Slow or rapid heart rate.**
- **Unexplained weight loss or weight gain.**
- **Difficulty tolerating cold or heat.**
- **Depression or anxiety.**
- **Irregular menstrual periods.**

If you're experiencing any of these symptoms, talk to your healthcare provider about getting a blood test to check your thyroid function.

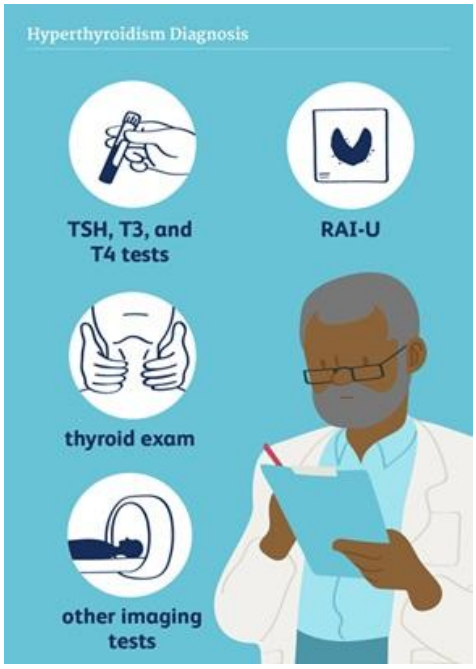
What are common tests to check the health of the thyroid?

The first-line test for checking the health of your thyroid is a blood test that measures your levels of thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH). It's a screening test for both hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism.

In general, the normal range for a TSH blood test is 0.5 to 5.0 mIU/L (milli-international units per liter). However, this can vary from lab to lab and depending on certain factors, such as pregnancy and your age.

Your provider can also check the levels of T4 and T3 (thyroid hormones) in your blood.

If your test results come back abnormal, your provider may suggest having an imaging test such as a thyroid scan, which uses small amounts of a safe radioactive material to create images of your thyroid, or a thyroid ultrasound.



How are thyroid conditions treated?

There are several treatment options for thyroid conditions depending on what the conditions are and how severe they are. The three main options for treatment include:

- **Medication.**
- **Surgery.**
- **Radiation therapy and chemotherapy.**

Medication

Medications for thyroid conditions include:

- **Antithyroid medications:** **These medications block the ability of your thyroid to make hormones. Healthcare providers may prescribe this for hyperthyroidism.**
- **Beta-blockers:** **These medications help treat symptoms of hyperthyroidism, such as rapid heartbeat, but they do not treat the thyroid condition itself.**
- **Radioactive iodine:** **This medication damages thyroid cells, eventually leading to the destruction of your thyroid gland. This is a treatment option for hyperthyroidism and thyroid cancer.**
- **Thyroid hormone medications:** **These medications are a synthetic form of thyroid hormones for the treatment of hypothyroidism. People who have a thyroidectomy or a nonfunctioning thyroid from radioactive iodine usually need to take these medications for the rest of their life.**

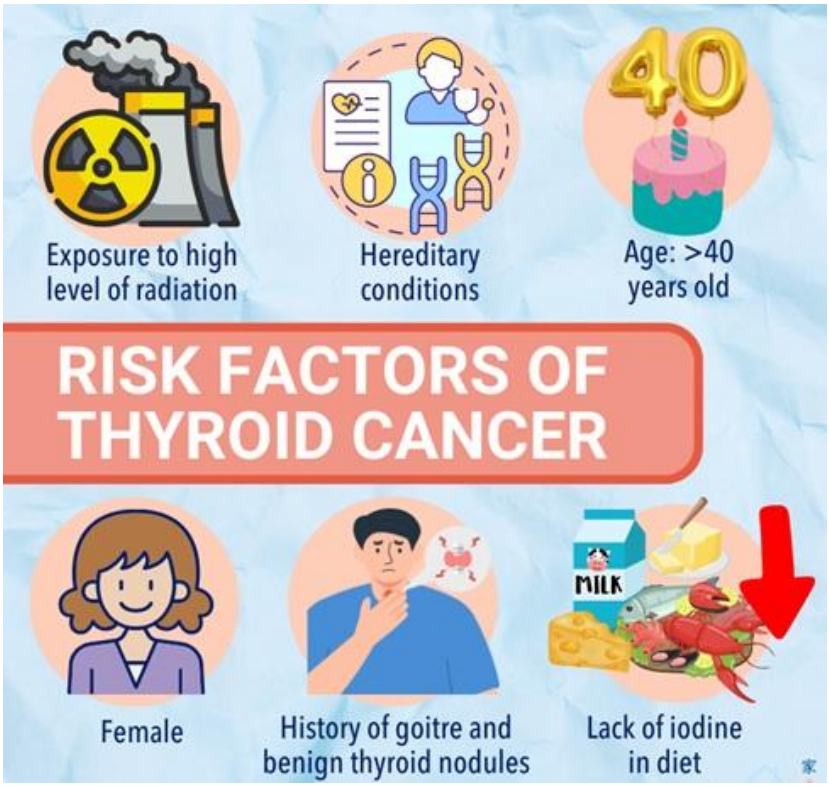
Surgery

The most common type of surgery associated with thyroid conditions is a thyroidectomy. A thyroidectomy is the surgical removal of your entire thyroid gland. Thyroidectomy is one of the treatment options for thyroid disease and is the first-line treatment for thyroid cancer.

Another surgery option is a lobectomy, which involves removing only a part of your thyroid.

Radiation therapy and chemotherapy

Radiation therapy and/or chemotherapy are treatment options for thyroid cancer. Both therapies kill cancer cells and prevent them from growing. Most cases of thyroid cancer do not require radiation or chemotherapy.



What are the risk factors for developing a thyroid condition?

Thyroid conditions are common and can affect anyone at any age. However, some factors put you at a higher risk of developing a thyroid condition, including:

- **Having a family history of thyroid disease.**
- **Having an autoimmune condition, such as Type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis or lupus.**
- **Taking a medication that's high in iodine.**
- **Being older than 60, especially if you're female.**

How can I keep my thyroid healthy?

The main way to keep your thyroid healthy is to make sure you're getting enough iodine in your diet. Your thyroid needs iodine to make thyroid hormones. The good news is that the majority of people get adequate amounts of iodine through iodized table salt and foods that are fortified with iodine.
Other food sources that contain iodine include:

- **Cheese.**
- **Cow's milk.**
- **Eggs.**
- **Yogurt.**
- **Saltwater fish.**
- **Shellfish.**
- **Seaweed.**
- **Soy milk.**
- **Soy sauce.**

However, it's important not to consume too much iodine because it can cause problems. If you have any questions or concerns about your thyroid health, don't be afraid to talk to your healthcare provider.

When should I call my doctor about my thyroid?

If you're experiencing symptoms of thyroid disease, such as changes in your weight, heart rate and temperature sensitivity, contact your healthcare provider. They can run a simple blood test to see if your thyroid is the cause of your symptoms.

Conclusion

In conclusion I want to recap the most important points in this kind of long article. I found an excellent website that does this the best – I think.

Most of the following article repeats what we learned above but it is a good recap so I'm including it.

What is Thyroid Disease? Q&A with an Endocrinologist

Your thyroid plays a big role in many of your body's main functions. As an endocrine gland, it produces and releases hormones affecting your breathing, heart rate, digestion, and even your mood.

Thyroid diseases occur when your thyroid over- or underproduces these hormones. Debra Margulies, MD, an endocrinologist at Summit Health, answers questions about thyroid diseases called hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism. She explains the causes, symptoms and treatments for these common conditions.

What is your thyroid, and why is it important for your body?

The thyroid is a small butterfly-shaped gland in the front of your lower neck. Its job is to produce thyroid hormones that help control how your body uses energy. The thyroid is vital to most of your body's functions, and if your thyroid isn't working properly, neither will you.

What is hypothyroidism?

If your thyroid does not produce enough thyroid hormone, you could have hypothyroidism, also called underactive thyroid.

What are the common symptoms of hypothyroidism?

When left untreated, common symptoms of hypothyroidism may include:

- Fatigue
- Weight gain
- Dry skin
- Constipation
- Changes in hair
- Feeling cold

What causes hypothyroidism?

In the U.S., hypothyroidism is most commonly caused by an autoimmune disorder called Hashimoto's thyroiditis. In people with Hashimoto's thyroiditis, the immune system inappropriately creates antibodies that can attack the thyroid gland. If the antibodies are successful, hypothyroidism can result.

Other causes of hypothyroidism can include thyroid surgery, pituitary diseases and certain medical therapies used to treat cancer.

What is hyperthyroidism?

An overactive thyroid, or "hyperthyroidism," occurs when the thyroid gland overproduces thyroid hormone beyond the body's needs.

What are the common symptoms of hyperthyroidism?

Common symptoms of hyperthyroidism may include:

- Fatigue
- Racing heart
- Tremor of the hands
- Increased anxiety

- Weight loss
- Swelling of the neck
- A feeling of heat intolerance

What causes hyperthyroidism?

The most common cause of hyperthyroidism is another autoimmune condition called Graves' Disease. Other causes can include “hot” or toxic growths on the thyroid, taking too much medication for the treatment of hypothyroidism and thyroiditis.

Thyroiditis refers to a temporary inflammation of the thyroid gland. The cause of thyroiditis often cannot be determined, but there are several known triggers. These include the delivery of a baby, an upper respiratory virus and a rare side effect of certain medications.

How are hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism diagnosed?

Both conditions are diagnosed with blood tests, including the thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) test. Imaging studies may also be recommended to aid in diagnosis.

What is thyroid-stimulating hormone?

TSH, also known as thyrotropin, is produced by your pituitary gland. TSH controls the release of thyroid hormones from your thyroid.

Measuring your TSH levels is the most accurate and reliable blood test to determine thyroid function. Factors affecting the TSH test result other than the thyroid gland status or thyroid medication dose can include pregnancy, advanced age, certain medications and other underlying health conditions.

What are target TSH levels?

The target TSH level for most people is between 0.5 and 4.5 milli-international units per liter. This target range may vary depending on the lab assay and your health history. TSH levels that are too high or too low may indicate a thyroid problem.

A low TSH level typically indicates that a person is either overproducing thyroid hormone, also known as hyperthyroidism, or is on too high of a dose of thyroid hormone medication. A high TSH level indicates that your body is not making enough thyroid hormone, resulting in hypothyroidism, or if you are on thyroid hormone medication, the dose is too low.

How is hypothyroidism treated?

Hypothyroidism is usually treated by taking a daily hormone replacement tablet called levothyroxine. Levothyroxine is a medication taken as an oral tablet that replaces the amount of hormone that your thyroid is not making.

Levothyroxine dosages can be individualized and adjusted according to your lab results to achieve a normal TSH level for you. It’s important to take your thyroid medication as prescribed in the morning, separated properly from food and other drugs and supplements.

It’s also important to have your TSH tested periodically to determine if your dose or how you take your medication needs to be adjusted. There are no evidence-based dietary or lifestyle modifications otherwise recommended for managing hypothyroidism.

How is hyperthyroidism treated?

The treatment of hyperthyroidism depends on the cause and on the individual patient. Treatments used in the management of hyperthyroidism include medications, radioactive iodine, radiofrequency ablation or thyroid surgery.

When should I be referred to an endocrinologist?

You should see an endocrinologist when goal TSH levels cannot be achieved or maintained with success. Referral is also recommended for women with hypothyroidism who are trying to conceive or are pregnant.

Talk openly with your health care provider about your symptoms and any concerns or questions regarding hypothyroidism and its treatment. Through these conversations and shared decision-making regarding dosage and interval of follow-up visits, you can find the best treatment plan for you.

Well, that's it. I hope you learned a little bit about your thyroid. I sure did! I'm going to the doctor for my regular semi-annual checkup this week. I had my blood test last week. I just checked my TSH level and it is 1.56 (Normal or target TSH level is between 0.5 and 4.5 milli-international units per liter), so I believe that my thyroid is okay.

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