Terry Talks Nutrition

Compliments of Terry... Naturally

Is Your Thyroid Gland Working Properly?

Key Words

thyroid, hypothyroid, low thyroid, iodine, L-tyrosine, T3, T4, TSH, weight loss, energy

If your body was a business, your brain would be the president, but your thyroid gland would most definitely be on the executive committee. This important gland releases hormones that affect energy, weight gain or loss, libido, fertility, brain development, bone growth, temperature—the list goes on and on.

Unfortunately, in this world of toxins, pollution, and Frankenfoods, our thyroid glands are under assault almost from the moment we are conceived. Underactive thyroid is virtually epidemic in people over the age of 40, and younger and younger people are experiencing problems with supporting healthy thyroid function.

But how do you know if your thyroid is working the way it is supposed to work? How do you know if you are hypothyroid? In this week's *Terry Talks Nutrition*, we will look at common symptoms of thyroid dysfunction, as well as powerful natural interventions to help get this important gland back on track to optimal wellness!

How Do I Know I Have a Thyroid Issue?

One of the questions I'm most commonly asked is how to know when it is the thyroid gland, and not something else, that is causing a person distress. Below is a list of common symptoms of thyroid problems. If you answer "yes" to three or more please keep reading to learn more about treating low thyroid (hypothyroid) hormone levels and how you can keep your thyroid gland functioning at its peak.

- Aching muscles?
- Are you always fatigued or exhausted?
- Are you irritable or impatient?
- Are your hands and feet usually cold?
- Do you often feel depressed or anxious?
- Is your hair coarse, dry, and lifeless?
- Is your hair thinning?
- Is your skin dry?
- Puffy face, especially in the morning?
- Puffy eyelids, especially in the morning?
- Protruding lower lip?
- Loss of outer 1/3rd of eyebrow?
- Loss of libido?
- Gaining weight easily without eating more?
- Do you have insomnia?
- Slow heartbeat?
- Are you losing your enthusiasm for life?
- Are you listless, forgetful and anti-social?
- Muscle cramps?
- Increased menstrual flow?
- More frequent periods?
- Brain fog?
- Constipation?
- Infertility?

Function of the Thyroid Gland

The thyroid is a butterfly shaped gland which lies at the base of the neck. It secretes hormones which control how your body uses energy, makes protein, regulates body temperature, and many other vital functions. Thyroxine (T4) is the primary hormone secreted by the thyroid, which is converted into active triiodothyronine (T3), as needed, to control the body's metabolic rate. If the body produces too little T4, many of its normal chemical processes slow down, a condition known as hypothyroidism (low thyroid). This imbalance of thyroid hormones can produce skin disorders, irregular heartbeat, congestive heart failure, high blood pressure, muscle dysfunction, gastrointestinal disturbances, mental confusion, severe depression, decreased libido, and extreme fatigue. The thyroid very definitely affects how you feel and how you relate to life in general.

Testing Thyroid Hormone Levels

Many doctors rely completely on a blood test that can be grossly inaccurate and often overlooks the majority of low thyroid function diagnoses. This is the TSH (Thyroid Stimulating Hormone) test. The pituitary gland releases TSH to signal the thyroid gland to produce thyroid hormones. If TSH levels are very high, it is an indicator that the thyroid gland is not releasing enough hormones. However, this test doesn't measure the *actual* levels of T4 and T3. Testing only for T4 levels, and finding they are "normal" may not reveal problems with a low conversion rate of T4 to T3. Therefore, it is important to test TSH *plus* T4 and T3 levels in order to get a true picture of what is happening with thyroid hormones.

The other problem with thyroid hormone testing is the range that is considered "normal." Some people may have multiple symptoms of thyroid dysfunction, but because the results are within what is considered "normal" for most people, no treatment is initiated. Progressive, integrative medicine practitioners are advocating that one should "treat the person, not the number," but unfortunately this excellent practice has not been readily accepted in the broader allopathic community, where rigid reliance on numbers is deeply embedded.

A Test You Can Do at Home

A test initiated by Dr. Broda Barnes, considered to be one of the premier experts on thyroid, is a far better test and has the added convenience that you can perform it in your own home. The procedure, which measures basal body temperature (BBT) is as follows:

- Take a non-digital (glass) thermometer and place it on your bedside table
- In the morning upon wakening, without getting out of bed, place the thermometer in your armpit and hold your arm close to body for 10 minutes
- Read temperature and record (since temperature rises with ovulation and stays higher until menses occurs, pre-menopausal women should only monitor their temperature during the first 7 days following the end of their period to get a true reading)
- Repeat procedure each day for at least three days, preferably 10 days

A normal BBT is between 97.8 and 98.2 degrees Fahrenheit. Anything consistently under 97.8 indicates thyroid dysfunction.

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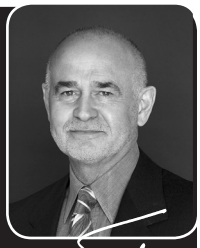

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Drug Treatment Protocol

When physicians diagnose hypothyroidism, meaning the blood test numbers are so low that adding thyroid hormone back into the body is indicated, they usually prescribe levothyroxine (Synthroid, Levoxyl, Levothroid), a synthetic drug which mimics the thyroid hormone T4. It is their contention that if the body has enough T4, it will manufacture T3 on its own, in adequate proportion. This is not true. Many allopathic doctors do not recommend natural thyroid extract (i.e., Armour®) because they believe it is not stable and gives unreliable results, though virtually all naturopathic doctors disagree. Natural whole thyroid is derived from dehydrated porcine (pork) thyroid and contains **all** the thyroid hormones including T3 and T4. Many holistic and integrative doctors prefer this natural form of thyroid supplementation. It does require a prescription because it is classified as a prescription drug. However, if your thyroid is so low you need supplementation, I feel the natural form of thyroid hormone is most compatible with your body's metabolic function. I recommend that you find a physician that will prescribe it for you. You will find it worth the search.

Iodine

Iodine is to the thyroid what calcium is to the bone. It is very common that a deficiency of iodine can cause hypothyroidism or suboptimal thyroid function. It is estimated that over 300 million people worldwide have chronic goiters (swollen thyroid glands) because they consume very little iodine. The swelling is caused by the action of thyroid stimulating hormone released by the pituitary. The TSH stimulates the thyroid, but without iodine, the thyroid is unable to create T4. The TSH continues to stimulate the thyroid, which then swells, causing the goiter. Sufficient iodine intake *prevents* goiter formation by allowing the thyroid to respond properly to TSH and release thyroid hormones.

The Controversy over Iodine

Now let's discuss the controversial part of iodine therapy. In medical schools in the mid 1900's, iodine was literally considered a magic medicine. The Nobel Laureate, Dr. Albert Szent Gyorgi, the physician who discovered vitamin C writes, *"When I was a medical student, iodine in the form of KI (potassium iodide) was the universal medicine. Nobody knew what it did, but it did something and did something good. We students used to sum up the situation in this little rhyme: if ye don't know where, what, and why, prescribe ye then K and I."* Iodine was always used for infections, and for pneumonia and bronchitis. Lack of it was considered to be the cause of mental slowness. Even today, iodine deficiency is considered to be the most common cause of preventable brain damage in the world. But in the 1940's, a single paper written by two researchers completely changed the way we use iodine. This poorly-documented paper gave the impression that iodine use was not only archaic, but not necessary and could even be dangerous, citing hyperthyroidism (excessive thyroid hormones) as a side effect. Almost overnight, the use of iodine in medicine was stopped and in its place we have a fear of one of the most important and critical nutrients in our diet. Iodine costs just pennies a day. With the advent of modern drugs in the 1940's and 1950's, could the profits realized by the drug companies have a bearing on discrediting the use of iodine for hypothyroidism?

Iodine Plus L-Tyrosine = Thyroid Hormones

Not only do we need levels of iodine far greater than scientists previously thought, but without the important amino acid, tyrosine, there would be no thyroid hormone function. It is absolutely necessary for the body to produce thyroid (as well as noradrenaline and dopamine) hormones. Tyrosine also is an excellent stress reliever and an excellent natural treatment for depression. Together, intake of iodine and L-tyrosine can keep the thyroid nourished and prevent goiter, hypothyroidism, and a multitude of symptoms associated with low thyroid hormone levels.

Additional Recommendations

If you have been suffering from any chronic illness and no one seems to have an answer, I believe the following recommendations can improve your existing condition 50% to 100%:

- Start today by adding a natural thyroid support formula that contains therapeutic levels of both iodine and L-tyrosine to your supplement regimen
- Take one 10-grain betaine hydrochloric acid (HCl) capsule after each meal. If you feel a warming sensation in your stomach, it's possible that you don't need the HCl or just take it at your main meal
- Avoid all dairy and gluten products

I truly believe everyone can benefit significantly from using an iodine and L–tyrosine complex. Your whole life and personality will change once you begin this therapy. You will see changes within several weeks, but be patient - **to fully restore the thyroid and its metabolic function may take 3-6 months for many people.** Remember, you may have been low thyroid all your life. If your mother had low thyroid, more than likely you have had low thyroid since birth, so be patient. Rome was not built in a day.

Look for a formula with these ingredients at your local health food store:

Iodine (Potassium Iodide)	30 mg	20,000%
L-Tyrosine	400 mg	**

NOTE: HCl (stomach acid) is required to utilize thyroid medications. If you are taking any form of antacid you are essentially reducing stomach acid which is required to absorb thyroxine (T4). These drugs can either neutralize stomach acid (Tums®, Rolaids®, etc) or reduce or stop the stomach's production of acid altogether (Pepcid® AC, Tagamet®, Prilosec OTC®, etc). If you are taking these medications, first fix your digestive system with the use of hydrochloric acid and digestive enzymes. I have found that many people who use acid neutralizers or acid blockers because they think they have too much stomach acid, in reality require supplementation with hydrochloric acid. I strongly recommend avoiding taking drugs to make your stomach less acidic. See my article *"Your Antacids are Killing You"* for more information.

Additionally, a high percentage of the population is intolerant to dairy and gluten-containing grains. I have seen some amazing results when people abstain from dairy and gluten products. Dairy contains casein and many grains contain gluten. Both are proteins that are extremely difficult for the majority of us to digest. However, be diligent when abstaining from dairy and gluten because just one meal or a snack containing either one can have lingering effects that may last up to six weeks.

When in doubt, always consult your physician or health care practitioner. This column is to provide you with information to maintain your health.

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From the Book by Dr. David Brownstein, M.D.

IODINE

Why You Need It
Why You Can't Live Without It 3rd Edition

"It still astounds me how much misinformation there is about iodine. This occurs with physicians and lay people alike. The 'wives tale' that we get enough iodine in iodized salt has been parroted for over 50 years. This 'wives tale' is false. The research is clear, iodized salt is a poor source of iodide as it is not bioavailable for the body.

Iodine deficiency is widespread. Conventional medicine has failed to understand this fact. However, with increased research, the truth will come out. It has to. There is no alternative physiology or alternative biochemistry. Science does not lie. Iodine deficiency does occur in today's world and it is occurring at very high levels.

Correcting iodine deficiency has proven to have many positive health benefits. Ensuring adequate iodine levels helps prevent and treat autoimmune illnesses, thyroid disorders, cancer and other conditions. This book will educate the reader on the benefits of the remarkable nutrient iodine."

For more information on Dr. David Brownstein's work go to www.drbrownstein.com

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