

Thyroid Disease – Why This Epidemic?

By Dr. George Springer

Did you know:

- an estimated 27 million Americans have Thyroid disease?
- more than half are undiagnosed or misdiagnosed?
- thyroid problems in women occur seven times more often than in men?
- thyroid problems can be triggered by things as simple as your drinking water or swimming in your pool?

On a global scale, a staggering 200 million people have problems with their thyroid glands, with over 50 percent remaining undiagnosed. In the US alone, the instance of thyroid disease is running close to epidemic levels and equally as worrying is the number of un-diagnosed or mis-diagnosed cases. So just what is responsible for these runaway statistics?

The Thyroid Gland – So Small, Yet So Vital

Most people would locate their thyroid gland in the neck area, and many know it is somehow linked to weight-gain or weight-loss. How many times have you heard an over-weight person say “I have thyroid problems”? Well what does that really mean?

The thyroid gland sits wrapped around the windpipe behind and below the Adam’s Apple area. This small bowtie-shaped gland produces several hormones in both men and women, the two most important being triiodothyronine (T3) and thyroxine (T4). These hormones help convert oxygen and calories into energy, making the thyroid the master gland of metabolism. The hormones are also essential for the proper functioning of all our organs, including our heart, musculoskeletal system and brain.

Hypo or Hyper?

The two most common forms of thyroid disease are Hypothyroidism and Hyperthyroidism and as their names suggest, they are at opposite end of the scale.

When it functions as it should, the thyroid will produce T3 and T4 at a 20% - 80% ratio. An under-production of these hormones will slow down the body’s metabolism, causing *Hypothyroidism*. Common symptoms of this condition are weight-gain despite eating sensibly, feeling cold, fatigue, depression and possibly increased blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Hyperthyroidism occurs when an excess of T3 and T4 speeds up the body’s metabolism and, if the mild condition is left untreated it can lead to complications

such as severe weight-loss despite a healthy appetite, nervousness, staring eyes, accelerated heart rate and insomnia.

Why This Epidemic?

Thyroid disease is one of the silent epidemics of our time. The shocking fact is that nearly half of all women and a quarter of all men in the US will die with evidence of an inflamed thyroid.

As with many of today's illnesses, the increased incidence of thyroid disease can be linked to an over-burden of toxins caused by pollution through air, water and food. If you have a concern about your thyroid, you may want to note the following potential causes of problems:

Iodine – deficiency is one cause of hypothyroidism. However, studies are also showing that in the case of chronic autoimmune thyroiditis, the highest prevalence occurs in countries with the highest intake of iodine, such as the US and Japan. So, although iodine supplementation should be implemented to prevent and treat iodine-deficiency disorders, supplementation should be maintained at a safe level.

Smoking – has a negative impact on thyroid function and can cause a 3 to 5 fold increase in the risk of all types of thyroid disease.

Tap water - Standard water-treatment plants cannot remove the chemical perchlorate from the water supply. According to one researcher, "There is a statistical association between low-level contamination with ammonium perchlorate and elevated or abnormal thyroid function." Also, chlorine content in the water can displace the much-needed iodine.

Fluoride – is an enzyme poison which accumulates in the body. Since the body can only eliminate 50% of its total fluoride intake, this build-up can cause harm to the thyroid by blocking the use of iodine.

Pesticides - such as sumithrin (Anvil) and resmethrin (Scourge), are coming under considerable criticism for their adverse chronic effects on the thyroid.

Family history – of thyroid disease is a warning signal. Also a family history of depression, autoimmune disease, chronic fatigue or weight issues can signify thyroid problems.

Radiation and X-Rays – are known to cause damage to the thyroid and technicians should always cover the patient's throat.

Stress – is a factor in almost every kind of disease and can affect the thyroid.

Menopause – hormonal changes during this period of a woman's life can wreak havoc on her thyroid.

Why This Misdiagnosis?

The statistic that more than 50 per cent of thyroid disorders remain un-diagnosed is alarming. Why is this? One problem is that because symptoms of hypothyroidism often vary from person to person and are non-specific, the correct diagnosis can easily be missed. Many cases remain undiagnosed because some practitioners and the patients themselves, mistake the symptoms of hypothyroidism for depression, obesity or menopause.

Hyperthyroidism tends to run in families, occurring most often in young women. It is often misdiagnosed as an eating disorder, anxiety or stress.

Thyroid Treatment at LifeWorks

The thyroid affects all the other hormones in the body and its proper regulation is essential to good hormonal balance and health. With the disturbing increase in thyroid disease, at LifeWorks we suggest that an annual screening of thyroid function be done. This would include blood tests that check on thyroid hormone levels and body iodine levels.

However, the laboratory testing that is performed at LifeWorks goes beyond the limits of the typical TSH and T4 testing done by many physicians. It is not unusual for these levels to be normal and not accurately reflect underlying problems with proper conversion of the thyroid hormone and/or potential immune system influences affecting thyroid function. In addition, specialized testing allows us to see if the thyroid hormone (T3) is being used properly at the cellular level. And, perhaps, most importantly, at LifeWorks, we treat people. We don't merely respond to their laboratory numbers.

Getting the correct diagnosis and treatment of thyroid problems has made a difference to a lot of people's lives and it could do the same for you! Call for 727 466 6789 for more information or an appointment, or visit www.lifeworkswellnesscenter.com.

Dr. George Springer has practiced alternative medicine, nutrition, acupuncture, and chiropractic manipulation for 29 years. At LifeWorks, Dr. Springer treats all forms of chronic disease, provides functional laboratory evaluation for patients with specific individual nutrition recommendations, treats patients with chronic pain, chronic fatigue neuro-musculoskeletal problems, and provides support to other programs.

Success Story

“For 13 years I have had thyroid and health issues that nobody seemed to be able to help me with. It was one test after another with negative results and still no-one seemed to know what, if anything, could be done.

Then I decided to try LifeWorks Wellness Center. I can now report that my life and health issues are turning in a positive direction and I am losing weight when I never could before. I feel so much better, especially because they give me answers to the questions that could not be answered in the past. Thank-you everybody at LifeWorks.” Christy N.