

[IMAGE]

Healthy Thyroid, Healthy You: 9 Causes of Thyroid Imbalances

By Kristen Bobik, DC, DABCA

How you sleep, how easily you wake up, and how much energy and stamina you have during the day are directly related to the levels of the thyroid hormones. The thyroid is heavily involved in so many more processes in the body as well!

Hypothyroidism is a common health condition in the U.S., and may cause symptoms such as weight gain, fatigue, pale and cold skin, constipation, high cholesterol levels, weakness, and joint pain. *Hyperthyroidism* may result in symptoms such as weight loss, tremors, heart palpitations or rapid heartbeat, difficulty sleeping, and so forth. But naturally, patients won't typically present with a "textbook" description or even have all symptoms occurring at the same time. It could be something as subtle as reporting you "just can't make it through a day without coffee anymore," or your doctor repeatedly running thyroid panels that are within normal ranges, but you still experience symptoms.

Testing for Imbalances

One of the main functions of the thyroid gland is to help regulate body temperature. The Barnes temperature test takes an average body temperature upon waking to see how active the gland is. The thyroid gland requires iodine to function, and iodine is common now in the standard American diet. For an iodine patch test, you apply iodine in a square patch to your inner forearm and track how long it takes to lighten over a 24-hour period. If it lightens very quickly, the thyroid may not have sufficient iodine.

thyroid - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark In addition, the thyroid gland also helps the heart utilize cholesterol, and that can be another sign that the hormones in the body aren't functionally optimally.

Here are nine causes of thyroid imbalances and what further steps you might want to explore with your doctor if they determine you have a thyroid issue:

1. Environmental Factors

The body is shutting down because it's exhausted. The two most common examples of environmental factors affecting the thyroid gland are high stress levels and lack of sleep. Sleep is literally the body's time to heal itself; depriving ourselves of adequate sleep has a much greater effect than most of us realize.

Constant stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system will cause excess cortisol in the body, which is a hormone linked to increased risks of heart disease (and other conditions), raises blood pressure, and decreases the function of the immune system.

Deep breathing exercises, lavender essential oil, elimination of electronics from the bedroom, and yoga / meditation / stretching can all help reduce stress and improve sleep.

2. GI Function

Not only does our digestive system break down food to use as nutrients, but it also contains almost 80 percent of our immune system! Food intolerances are a common cause of digestive problems, and there is a strong link in the research to gluten intolerance and celiac disease with thyroid imbalances.

3. Toxicity

A common sign of toxicity in the body can be bags underneath the eyes. Liver is our main organ responsible for detoxing the body, and the body requires elimination of waste from what we eat, drink, think, and expose our skin to. Detox can involve dietary changes, reduction of chemical exposure in the home, and nutritional supplementation.

4. Hormonal Imbalances

Potential causes of hormonal imbalances include pregnancy, contraceptive use, estrogen / hormone replacement therapy, or bowel dysfunctions. Too much estrogen will increase the activity in the thyroid gland. Research on hormone replacement therapy (estrogen as medication) suggest it does not protect patients from incontinence, Alzheimer's, heart disease and so forth, and actually increases the risk of cancer. Natural ways to resolve a hormonal imbalance, especially around menopausal age, include acupuncture and nutritional supplementation.

5. Consumption of Soy Products and Non-Organic Dairy

Soy and non-organic dairy both will increase estrogen in the body and therefore affect the thyroid gland. I recommend anyone (regardless of your health condition) eliminate both of these items from the diet. Remember, both of these items are hidden in many processed foods.

6. Constipation

Too many toxins being recycled in our bowels from lack of elimination will put extra estrogen into system. My favorite, most effective and natural solutions for constipation are acupuncture; dietary changes like eliminating sugar and grains; probiotic supplementation; food intolerance testing; and other lab measurements that could enlighten the reason for constipation.

7. Nutritional Deficiencies

This includes deficiencies such as B12 or iron deficiency. Some of the signs of nutrient deficiencies are similar to symptoms of hypothyroidism. Potential causes of nutrient deficiency could include lack of nutritional dietary habits or heavy metal toxicity (which is actually much more common than it sounds). Hair analysis is the best long-term blueprint of the body to assess for heavy-metal toxicity or nutrient deficiencies.

8. Immune System Dysfunction

Immune system dysfunction, such as adrenal problems which increase cortisol in the body, increase your risk for heart disease (among other conditions) and keep your body in constant "flight or fight" panic mode. Adrenal imbalances are typically measured with easy-to-perform, take-home saliva testing.

9. Chronic Candidiasis

Chronic candidiasis may cause additional symptoms such as white patches in the mouth, memory problems, issues with sugar handling, gas and bloating, mucous in the stool, and cold hands or feet. Candida is typically measured via bloodwork. Solutions for candidiasis may include dietary changes, detoxification, and the use of herbs or nutritional supplements.

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