

## Thyroid Awareness MONTH



### ABOUT THE THYROID

The thyroid gland is a small, butterfly-shaped gland located in the base of the neck just below the Adam's apple. Although relatively small, the thyroid gland plays a huge role in our body, influencing the function of many of the body's most important organs, including the heart, brain, liver, kidneys and skin. Ensuring that the thyroid gland is healthy and functioning properly is vitally important to the body's overall well-being.

### HOW YOUR THYROID WORKS

Think of your thyroid as a car engine that sets the pace at which your body operates. An engine produces the required amount of energy for a car to move at a certain speed. In the same way, your thyroid gland manufactures enough thyroid hormone to prompt your cells to perform a function at a certain rate. Just as a car can't produce energy without gas, your thyroid needs fuel to produce thyroid hormone. This fuel is iodine. Iodine comes from your diet and is found in iodized table salt, seafood, dairy products and prunes. Your thyroid extracts this necessary ingredient from your bloodstream and uses it to make two kinds of thyroid hormone: thyroxine, also called T4 because it contains four iodine atoms, and triiodothyronine, or T3, which contains three iodine atoms. T3 is made from T4 when one atom is removed, a conversion that occurs mostly outside the thyroid in organs and tissues where T3 is used the most, such as the liver, the kidneys and the brain.

### WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

When outside influences such as disease, damage to the thyroid or certain medicines break down communication, your thyroid might not produce enough hormone. This would slow down all of your body's functions, a condition known as hypothyroidism or underactive thyroid. Your thyroid could also produce too much hormone sending your systems into overdrive, a condition known as hyperthyroidism or overactive thyroid. These two conditions are most often features of an underlying thyroid disease. When considering thyroid disease, doctors ask two main questions: First, is the thyroid gland inappropriately producing an abnormal amount of thyroid hormone? And second, is there a structural change in the thyroid, such as a lump—known as a nodule—or an enlargement—known as a goiter? Though one of these characteristics does not necessarily imply that the other is present, many thyroid disorders display both.

# Had It Up To Here With Not Feeling Like Yourself?

It May Be Time To Get Your Thyroid Checked

Up To Here With These Symptoms? It Could Be Your

## Thyroid

- Unexplained changes in weight
- Fatigue or trouble sleeping
- Depression, anxiety or feelings of irritability
- Changes in memory or ability to concentrate
- Irregular menstrual periods
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Joint/muscle pain or weakness

### What Your Thyroid Does For You



The thyroid is a small, butterfly-shaped gland located at the base of the neck just below the Adam's apple. It produces important hormones that influence the heart, brain, liver, kidneys and skin. Although the thyroid is small, it plays a huge role in maintaining the function of these organs.

### When Things Go Wrong

The thyroid is vital for the growth, development and regulation of the body. Several different disorders can arise when your thyroid produces too much hormone (hyperthyroidism) or not enough (hypothyroidism).

#### COMMON THYROID DISORDERS

- Hyperthyroidism
- Hypothyroidism
- Graves' Disease
- Hashimoto's Thyroiditis
- Thyroid Nodules
- Thyroid Cancer
- Thyroid Eye Disease

### Millions Are Affected By Thyroid Disease – And Don't Even Know It

MORE THAN **30 MILLION**

Americans will develop some form of thyroid condition

UP TO **60%**

of those with thyroid disease are unaware of their condition

WOMEN ARE **5X**

more likely to suffer from hypothyroidism

**30-50%** OF PATIENTS

with thyroid disease have eye symptoms that may impair their vision

### Are You At Risk?

Common risk factors associated with thyroid disorders

- Type 1 diabetes
- Past radiation treatment to the head or neck area
- Family history
- Recent pregnancy

### Don't Let Your Thyroid Condition Go Untreated

Undiagnosed thyroid disease may put you at risk for other serious conditions

Weight loss  
Heart disease  
Infertility  
Weight gain  
Osteoporosis

## HOW TO TAKE THE THYROID NECK CHECK

### STEP 1

Hold the mirror in your hand, focusing on the lower front area of your neck, above the collarbones, and below the voice box (larynx). Your thyroid gland is located in this area of your neck.

### STEP 2

While focusing on this area in the mirror, tip your head back.

### STEP 3

Take a drink of water and swallow.

### STEP 4

As you swallow, look at your neck. Check for any bulges or protrusions in this area when you swallow. Reminder: Don't confuse the Adam's apple with the thyroid gland. The thyroid gland is located further down on your neck, closer to the collarbone. You may want to repeat this process several times.

### STEP 5

If you do see any bulges or protrusions in this area, see your physician. You may have an enlarged thyroid gland or a thyroid nodule that should be checked to determine whether further evaluation is needed.

If you've had it **Up To Here**

Find an endocrinologist in your area: [aace.com/find-an-endo](http://aace.com/find-an-endo)

Learn more about your thyroid: [thyroidawareness.com](http://thyroidawareness.com)

with these symptoms or suspect you are at risk for thyroid disease, make an appointment to see an endocrinologist.