

Hypothyroidism – Fact Sheet

Hypothyroidism also referred to as an underactive or under functioning thyroid is when the thyroid gland cannot adequately produce and secrete enough of its thyroid hormones T3 and T4. Having an under functioning thyroid affects the metabolism of every cell in the body as the thyroid gland is the body's internal thermostat and is responsible for regulating temperature. Factors such as the pituitary gland not being able to secrete enough thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) which stimulates T3 and T4 production or less TSH being produced as a result of the hypothalamus not receiving messages to stimulate the pituitary gland enough, can cause the thyroid to inadequately function.

Common causes are iron deficiency and Hashimoto's disease.

- **Iodine deficiency** – Iodine is required to make thyroid hormones T3 and T4, therefore when there is a deficiency the thyroid gland becomes enlarged as it is trying to compensate by releasing more TSH but without the thyroid hormones actually being produced.
- **Hashimoto's disease** – is an autoimmune condition which results in the thyroid tissue being destroyed by circulating antibodies. The inflammation and eventual destruction of the gland by the body's own immune system prevents T3 and T4 being produced. The thyroid will enlarge and may progress to atrophy and fibrosis.

Signs and Symptoms:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fatigue ▪ Low energy levels ▪ Aching muscles ▪ Depression ▪ Low basal metabolic rate ▪ Difficulties concentrating ▪ Slowed speech ▪ Bradycardia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Slow pulse ▪ Weight gain ▪ Intolerance to cold temperatures ▪ Puffy face, hands and feet ▪ Brittle hair and hair loss ▪ Dry and thin skin ▪ Constipation ▪ Goiter |
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It is common for people with hypothyroidism to have difficulty conceiving as well as having a higher risk of miscarriage, premature deliveries and stillbirths.

Nutritional Considerations

- Always cook foods that contain goitrogenic substances and reduce/avoid eating large amounts of these foods as they have been found to prevent the utilisation of iodine in the body.
- Avoid/reduce refined white carbohydrates, sugars, wheat and processed foods as these foods have little nutritional value, may contain heavy metals, will not boost the metabolism, are pro-inflammatory and may worsen symptoms.
- Avoid/reduce caffeine contain beverages as they spike blood sugar levels.
- Consume foods rich in iodine as it is essential in the production of thyroid hormones.
- Eat complex carbohydrates and vegetarian sources of protein as they contain B vitamins which are essential for energy production in the body.
- Eat lean proteins as they contain zinc which is essential in normal thyroid function.

- Include raw nuts/seed into your diet as they are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin E and selenium which have all be linked to normal thyroid function and maintaining healthy immune system function.
- Eat lots of fresh vegetables as they are rich in antioxidants and other essential vitamins and minerals for overall immune function health.
- Drink lots of fresh filtered water, preferable fluoride and chlorine free as these minerals can inhibit thyroid function by blocking iodine receptors in the thyroid gland.

Other Suggestions

- Expose yourself to some sunlight – sunlight is able to stimulate the pineal gland for energy production.
- Engage in regular exercise – exercise has been shown to improve and stimulate thyroid gland secretion.

Customised nutritional plans comprising of a specific food plan with the support of nutrient/herbal supplements can be very effective in the management of hypothyroidism. If you require support please visit www.good4younutrition.com.au