

# The Wellness News

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## Thyroid Awareness Month

Do you know where your thyroid is? January is Thyroid Awareness Month, an event meant to help bring awareness to thyroid related conditions and to prevent people from needlessly suffering various thyroid related ailments. Here is what you need to know about the thyroid:

### What is the thyroid?

The thyroid is a butterfly shaped gland located at the front side of the neck. Through the production of hormones, the thyroid's main job is to regulate metabolism. It also monitors energy generation in various organs, the body's oxygen consumption, and heat production.

### Why do we need to know about the thyroid?

It is estimated that thyroid diseases affect approximately 30 million Americans, although some estimates are much higher. Thyroid conditions can easily be overlooked because thyroid hormone levels are not typically tested during routine blood work. These conditions can be misdiagnosed because the symptoms are similar to those of other conditions, such as depression. However, once properly diagnosed, thyroid conditions can be effectively treated.

Unfortunately, there are no preventive lifestyle measures that can be taken to avoid developing these conditions. Nevertheless, awareness of the disorders is a great way to prevent yourself and your loved ones from needlessly suffering through the uncomfortable symptoms related to thyroid disorders.

### What are common thyroid conditions?

Although there are many different thyroid conditions, there are only a specific few that are more prominent in the U.S.:

#### Hyperthyroidism

This condition occurs when the thyroid gland becomes overactive and produces too much of the hormone thyroxine. As the condition progresses, the

**If you have any symptoms that concern you, speak with your doctor. Since the symptoms can widely vary from person to person, your doctor will best be able to assess your health.**

## Common thyroid conditions

extra hormones cause the body's systems to speed up and overheat. Women between the ages of 20 and 40 are most likely to develop hyperthyroidism, but it can occur in men as well. This condition commonly runs in families.

### Symptoms:

- Swelling at the base of the neck
- Weight loss
- Fatigue
- Muscle weakness
- Heart palpitations
- Difficulty sleeping
- Frequent bowel movements
- Increased sweating
- Intolerance to heat
- Vision problems, sometimes accompanied by bulging eyes
- Increased irritability

### Diagnosis and Treatment:

Doctors typically do a quick physical exam to look for noticeable symptoms of hyperthyroidism, followed by a blood test. If results are positive, a follow up test is usually performed to diagnose the cause of the disorder. Treatment varies based on the cause of the disorder, but commonly involves anti-thyroid medications.

### Hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism occurs when the thyroid gland does not produce enough of certain important hormones. This upsets the normal chemical reactions of the body, specifically those related to metabolism. In fact, symptoms of hypothyroidism are similar to those associated with slow metabolism. Like hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism can be caused by an autoimmune disease, as well as from trauma inflicted to the thyroid. Hypothyroidism is most likely to occur in women, especially women above the age of 50.

## Hypothyroidism

### Symptoms:

- Weight gain
- Feeling cold
- Constipation
- Sluggishness
- Hoarse voice
- Puffy face
- Dry skin and hair
- Mental depression
- Decreased libido
- Weakness and fatigue

### Diagnosis and Treatment:

Hormone disorders are most often detected through blood tests, after a doctor suspects symptoms are related to the thyroid condition. Because hypothyroidism is more common in older women, some doctors will recommend screenings during regular physical exams. Treatment can vary, but sufferers of hypothyroidism are often prescribed synthetic hormones.

**Call Your Health Coach for More Information 1-800-433-2320**

### Sources:

<http://women.webmd.com>, <http://www.hormone.org/Thyroid/>,  
<http://www.thyroidawarenessmonth.com/>, <http://www.endocrineweb.com>