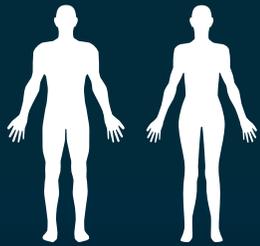


# The top ten things you may not know about thyroid disease



Your thyroid is a small, butterfly-shaped gland located in your neck that produces thyroid hormone, or TH, which regulates many of your body's essential functions, such as metabolism and heartbeat. But if your thyroid produces either too much or too little TH, it can have a significant impact on your overall health.

Women are the most likely to suffer from a thyroid disorder; they are a full 10 times as likely to contract it as their male counterparts. If you are a woman and are over the age of 35, you have about a 30 percent chance of suffering from this disorder.

## Here are the top ten things that you may not know about thyroid disease that can help you take charge of your health and wellness:

- 1 Low libido can be a side effect of a thyroid disorder. If you find that you suddenly have little or even no sexual desire, sluggish TH could be to blame and should be evaluated by your doctor.
- 2 Has your hair stylist noticed a change in your mane? If your hair is thinning or falling out, your thyroid may be producing too little TH.
- 3 Infertility, defined as being unable to conceive after one year of unprotected sex, has been linked to thyroid problems, as they can interfere with ovulation, but most doctors and fertility clinics do not test for them. Thyroid disorders are also linked to pregnancy complications, so if you are planning to become pregnant or do become pregnant, ask your doctor for a thyroid evaluation.
- 4 A change in your menstrual cycle could be a sign of a thyroid disorder. If your thyroid is producing too little TH, your periods may become longer, heavier, and closer together; on the other hand, if your thyroid is producing too much TH, your periods may become shorter, lighter, and further apart.
- 5 Sudden weight gain or an inability to lose weight is one of the most common signs of a thyroid condition. If you haven't changed your diet but have been gaining weight, or if you are eating better and exercising regularly and just can't lose the extra weight, you should ask your doctor about your thyroid. Conversely, sudden weight loss can also be a warning sign of thyroid issues.

- 6 Consuming certain foods, such as soy or caffeine, hinders TH absorption. Though soy can have many health benefits, it acts as a goitrogen, or substance that can cause the thyroid gland to become enlarged. After taking your thyroid medication, wait a few hours before drinking coffee.
- 7 Thyroid disorders affect your metabolism, but instead of eating several small meals per day to raise metabolism, thyroid patients should eat fewer meals spaced further apart to manage their leptin and insulin levels and to keep their metabolism in check.
- 8 Drinking enough water is one of the best things thyroid patients can do for their thyroid health and metabolism. Water helps reduce appetite, boost metabolism, eliminate water retention, and improve digestion and bowel health. If you have a thyroid condition, your doctor may recommend drinking one ounce of water daily for each pound that you weigh to keep you in good health.
- 9 If you think you may have a thyroid disorder, your doctor will likely order a thyroid stimulating hormone, or TSH, test. Though this test is how most doctors will make a diagnosis, doctors do not currently agree on what the normal range is for TSH. If your doctor orders this test, ask about also having autoimmune thyroid antibodies tests done, as they may be needed for some patients to be diagnosed.
- 10 If your doctor finds that you do have a thyroid disorder, he or she will likely prescribe synthetic hormones. There are many effective, FDA-approved thyroid medications. Ask your doctor about your options and together, determine which medication best fits your needs.

**Of the 30 million Americans who suffer a thyroid disorder, half go undiagnosed, experiencing symptoms such as:**

Fatigue	Bowel problems	Sleep disorders
Depression	High blood pressure	Infertility
Low libido	Unexplained pain	High cholesterol
Weight gain	Hair loss	Long, heavy menstrual periods
Heart palpitations		

