

12 Signs You May Have a Thyroid Problem : Hypothyroidism or Hyperthyroidism

The thyroid, a butterfly-shaped gland located in your neck is often not given importance as it should be given. This butterfly shaped gland is largely responsible for a wide range of body activities. The thyroid gland releases hormones and regulates many aspects of your health from breathing, heart rate, central and peripheral nervous systems, body weight, muscle strength, menstrual cycles, body temperature, cholesterol levels, and much more.

And if you are a woman over 35, your odds of having a thyroid disorder are high – more than 30% according to estimates. According to the American Thyroid Association (ATA), an estimated 20 million Americans have some form of thyroid disease. Women are 5 to 8 times more likely to have a thyroid problem than men, and 1 woman in 8 will likely develop a thyroid disorder during her lifetime.

So the question that arises here is why are so many affected by thyroid disease?

Experts have a number of theories regarding this but no hard answers.

According to experts, the major factors that influence the rise in thyroid cases are:

- The chemical toxins in the environment are linked to an increased risk of thyroid disease. Major culprits include perchlorate, pesticides, phthalates like bisphenol-A (BPA), and thyroid-disrupting endocrine

disruptors, also known as environmental estrogens.

- Radiation and nuclear exposure is another contributing factor that can trigger thyroid disorder. The radiation exposure that resulted from the Chernobyl disaster was a major trigger for thyroid disease, according to experts and similar effects can be seen down the road after Fukushima's disaster.
- Medical treatments that involve radiation to the head or neck area are also known to increase risk.
- Certain bacteria and viruses, the food-borne bacteria *Yersinia enterocolitica* for example, are known to trigger autoimmune disease and inflammatory thyroid conditions.
- Then there are other controllable factors like cigarette smoking, gluten allergies, gluten sensitivity, celiac disease, overconsumption of supplemental iodine, and overconsumption of soy products.

According to reports, up to 60% of those with a thyroid condition are unaware and undiagnosed. Thyroid conditions can increase your risk of obesity, heart disease, depression, anxiety, hair loss, sexual dysfunction and more. So you can understand, why it is important to recognize the signs and symptoms.

12 Most Common Symptoms of a Thyroid Problem

You don't need to have all these symptoms in order to have a thyroid problem, but here are the 12 most common signs.

Cognitive Decline

If your thyroid isn't functioning as it should, it can affect your cognitive functioning. Too much thyroid hormone (hyperthyroidism) can cause difficulty concentrating and too little (hypothyroidism) may cause forgetfulness and general

brain fog.

Unpredictable Bowel Movements

Disruption in hormone production can greatly influence your digestive system. Hypothyroidism patients often suffer from long-term constipation and often their constipation does not respond to treatment. On the other hand, hyperthyroidism patients due to their overactive thyroid can suffer from diarrhea or more frequent bowel movements.

Anxiety and Depression

Hypothyroidism is typically associated with depression whereas hyperthyroidism is more commonly associated with anxiety, panic attacks, and bipolar disorder. With your thyroid gland making either too much or too few hormones, the body functions can play havoc. Moreover, depression that does not respond to antidepressants may also be a sign of undiagnosed thyroid disorders.

Irregular Menstruation

Hypothyroidism cause more painful, frequent, and heavier periods while hyperthyroid women have infrequent and shorter menstruation, or even experience the cessation of their menstruation.

Recurrent Miscarriages

Another sign of thyroid disorder in women is the event of recurrent miscarriages. Both hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism can interfere with ovulation, which impairs fertility. Pregnant women with thyroid disorders are at greater risk for premature delivery and other pregnancy complications.

Swollen Face

Hypothyroidism is associated with edema or swelling which usually begins around the face, particularly above or below the eyes and along the jaw line. However, the skin on the side of the upper arms may be thickened early in the course of the disease, which will eventually spread throughout the body's connective tissues.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Extremities Pain

Carpal tunnel syndrome involves pain in the wrist, a tingling sensation or numbness in the hand, wrist, and fingers, and may involve swelling as well. This is a symptom of undertreated or untreated underactive thyroid. Patients could also suffer from shooting pain and a compressed tibial nerve in their legs due to tarsal tunnel and stabbing pain in their feet due to plantar fasciitis. Hyperthyroidism patients, on the other hand, experience pain or weakness in their upper arms and calves.

Hoarse Voice

Hoarseness is yet another sign of a thyroid disorder where your voice box (larynx) bears pressure from a thyroid nodule, which produces a hoarse sound when you speak. It could also be a sign of thyroid cancer. Also, when the thyroid becomes enlarged, this is known as 'goiter' and can be a sign of either hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism.

Changes in Hair and Skin

When all the major body systems are slowed down due to hypothyroidism, your body naturally sets some priorities for critical survival. Hair and skin are particularly vulnerable. The most unique and specific of all symptoms is the loss of

the outer edge of the eyebrows. In both hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism, hair can become brittle and dry and break easily. Skin can also become coarse, thick, dry, and scaly. Also, an unusual rash can appear on the skin of the shins called pretibial myxedema or thyroid dermopathy.

Cold Sensitivity

Hypothyroidism is associated with the sensation of cold or chills as your thyroid is underactive, i.e less energy to be burned by cells, so less heat. Whereas, in hyperthyroidism, cells are on overdrive as a result of an overactive thyroid causing feelings of warmth and profuse sweating.

Weight Loss/Gain

Thyroid patients can experience a drastic shift in their weight from high to low or vice versa. For example, hyperthyroidism patients could see a surprising drop in their weight, unable to gain further while the hypothyroidism patients could gain weight, making it difficult to lose even with diet or exercise.

Fatigue

In hypothyroidism, you feel the need to rest and restore energy throughout the day, although you have had your 8 hours of sleep. Taking naps during the day can be added to the symptom list. Hyperthyroidism, however, keeps you awake during the night, while leaving you exhausted the following day.

Understanding your symptoms is key to identifying your specific thyroid disorder, which makes it all the more important to know the difference between hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism. Having your thyroid removed is not the final word for you. Exercise has proven to be quite effective; besides, you can normalize your thyroid functioning by eating the right foods. The last thing you want is an undiagnosed

thyroid. Your doctor will aim to bring your thyroid activity back to a normal pace—not too fast or too slow. You must cooperate with your doctor—negligence can make the disorder lifelong. Having a thyroid stimulating hormone test (TSH) done will help you boil down to a clear and accurate result.

Related Reading:

- *Hypothyroidism – Natural Remedies, Causes, and How To Heal the Thyroid*
- *Holistic Guide to Healing the Endocrine System and Balancing Our Hormones*
- *Gluten, Candida, Leaky Gut Syndrome, and Autoimmune Diseases*
- *How To Detoxify and Heal From Vaccinations – For Adults and Children*