



Solutions for a Sluggish Thyroid

Keying in on Iodine

by Kathleen Barnes

It seems that a common mineral supplement that costs just pennies per day can stimulate an underactive thyroid, restore metabolism to normal levels, curb excess appetite, banish fatigue and generally improve everyone's health. Mounting scientific evidence shows that iodine may be an answer to many such health woes, especially for women.

"The thyroid acts as a throttle, the gas pedal for all metabolic functions in the human body," says Dr. Richard Shames, of San Rafael, California, author of *Thyroid Mind Power*.

If the thyroid is a driving force of human physiology, then iodine is its key fuel, says Dr. Robert Thompson, of Soldotna, Alaska, author of *What Doctors Fail to Tell You About Iodine & Your Thyroid*. "Every single cell in your body depends on thyroid hormone, and the thyroid depends on iodine for proper functioning."

"Without sufficient thyroid hormone, we have low energy, slower metabolism, lower immunity to illness and impaired repair and maintenance of

bones and joints," explains Shames.

After testing thousands of patients in his practice, Thompson estimates that 90 percent of North Americans are iodine deficient, citing what he calls "epidemic proportions" of hypothyroidism (low thyroid function) with symptoms comprising obesity, fatigue, brain fog, irregular or absent menstrual periods, hair loss and heat and cold intolerance.

Major Culprits

Estrogen: Hypothyroidism is overwhelmingly a women's disease, with women five to eight times more likely to suffer from it than men, according to the American Thyroid Association. "Estrogen inhibits the body's natural ability to absorb and utilize iodine," says Dr. Jorge Flechas, of Hendersonville, North Carolina, who specializes in thyroid disorders. "We find three periods in life when women need more iodine: at puberty and during both pregnancy and perimenopause or menopause. It's because estrogen levels tend to fluctuate wildly at those times, neutralizing the ability of iodine

gained through select foods to balance thyroid and other hormones." Flechas prescribes iodine supplements for most women at all three stages of life.

Toxic halogens: Iodine belongs to a group of halogens that includes chlorine, bromine and fluorine, three chemicals that are both toxic to the human body and block its ability to absorb iodine, explains Thompson.

"They're everywhere, in our air, water and food. It's nearly impossible to avoid them," reports Shames, a longtime advocate in the movement against the common practice of adding fluoride (a derivative of fluorine) and chlorine to municipal water. Fluoride is also added to many brands of toothpaste. Bromide is part of almost all commercial flour and flour products, as well as soft drinks.

Shames offers an historic insight. "Fluoride was once used to slow down an overactive thyroid, as recommended by the physicians' bible, the *Merck Manuals*. Now we're putting it in the water supply and wondering why we have a mushrooming epidemic of low thyroid incidence."

Food: "So-called 'iodized' salt doesn't contain much usable iodine, and neither does pink Himalayan sea salt," Shames cautions.

We've known that our soil is deficient in essential minerals such as iodine since at least 1936, when a special U.S. Senate report concluded that our soil was already severely depleted. "This simply means that when we grow produce, the plants cannot extract these vital nutrients from the soil for us—including iodine—if those nutrients aren't there in the first place," says Thompson. If anything, he adds, U.S. soils have become even more sterile in the 80 years since the report and, "Factory farming and the use of genetically modified (GMO) crops, Roundup herbicide and synthetic chemical fertilizers have undoubtedly worsened the situation."

Sources of Iodine

It's difficult to include sufficient natural iodine in our daily diet unless we follow a Japanese-style diet that includes lots

Nine in 10 North Americans may be iodine deficient. – Dr. Robert Thompson

of seaweed and saltwater fish, says Shames. Other food sources are shellfish, turkey, cheese, yogurt, milk, eggs, legumes, cranberries and strawberries.

There is little agreement about the optimal levels of iodine people need. The U.S. Department of Agriculture maintains that we need 150 micrograms a day, but iodine advocates are quick to point out that a person eating a typical Japanese diet (where hypothyroidism, or low thyroid activity, is rare) ingests 12.5 milligrams of iodine each day—83 times the amount recommended by the government.

Shames recommends getting an iodine lab test (available without a prescription at *CanaryClub.org*) to determine exact needs. Thompson recommends potassium iodide and sodium iodide supplements for thyroid health.

Kathleen Barnes is author of numerous natural health books, including User's Guide to Thyroid Disorders.

THYROID TOXINS TO AVOID

FLUORINE/FLUORIDE

- Fluoridated toothpaste
- Unfiltered municipal drinking water
- Some bottled teas
- Teflon pans
- Mechanically de-boned chicken

CHLORINE/CHLORIDE

- Virtually all municipal water
- Swimming pools, spas
- Poultry chilled in chlorinated water to kill bacteria
- Chlorine bleaches and other conventional household cleaners

BROMINE/BROMIDE

- Flour and flour products, except those labeled “unbrominated”
- Soft drinks
- Pesticides with methyl bromide
- Plastics
- Fire retardants in children's nightwear and some furniture
- Spa disinfectants

Source: What Doctors Fail to Tell You About Iodine & Your Thyroid, by Dr. Robert Thompson.

