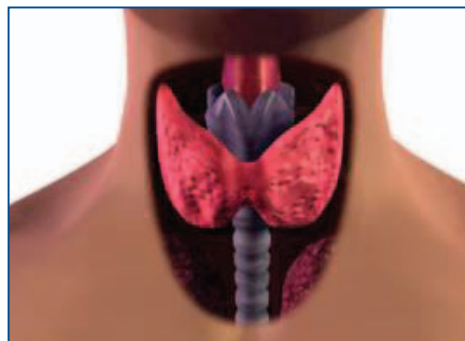


Causes of thyroid dysfunction

The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland that sits at the base of the neck, in front of the windpipe. It is the 'master controller' of metabolism.¹

What are thyroid dysfunctions?

If your thyroid is underactive it produces too little thyroid hormone, resulting in a condition called **hypothyroidism**. People with hypothyroidism use energy more slowly and their metabolism also slows down.² However, if your thyroid is overactive the gland releases too much thyroid hormone into the bloodstream, this results in a condition called hyperthyroidism which speeds up metabolism.³



Causes of hypothyroidism

There are many reasons why hypothyroidism develops and a common reason is the lack of iodine.⁴ The thyroid needs iodine to produce its hormones and too little iodine in your diet can cause your thyroid to stop working properly. Iodine rich foods include salmon/salty fish, lamb, tuna and eggs.⁵



The most common cause of acquired hypothyroidism is a condition called *Hashimoto thyroiditis*,⁶ where the body's own defence system (antibodies) attacks the thyroid. This causes a painless inflammation process which can damage the gland and reduce its ability to properly function.⁷

Other reasons for low levels of thyroid hormone in your blood include:

- Surgical removal of the thyroid gland
- Radioiodine treatment of the thyroid gland
- Radiation therapy to the head or neck
- Being born without a thyroid gland (also called congenital hypothyroidism)⁸
 - Congenital hypothyroidism is thankfully very rare, only about one in every 4,500 babies is affected⁸
- Disease to either the pituitary gland or the hypothalamus in the brain
 - These two organs stimulate your thyroid gland to properly function²

Causes of hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism occurs for different reasons. The most common cause (up to 70% of all cases) is a disease of the immune system called Graves' disease. Graves' disease tends to run in families and occurs more frequently in young women.³

Thyroid nodules

Thyroid nodules (abnormal growths / lumps on the thyroid gland) can also cause hyperthyroidism.³ Nodules in the thyroid gland are very common, and approximately 5% of them are malignant (thyroid cancer).⁹ Therefore, nodules generally need further investigating by the doctor.

The growth of nodules can affect the proper functioning of the thyroid gland.¹⁰ If the nodule is producing excessive amounts of thyroid hormone then the person will have symptoms of hyperthyroidism. Nobody is sure why people develop thyroid nodules, but a lack of dietary intake of iodine is thought to be a factor.¹⁰

Other causes of hyperthyroidism include:

- Thyroiditis (inflammation of the thyroid gland)³
- Taking too much thyroid hormone (given to treat hypothyroidism or an enlarged thyroid gland – also known as goitre)³

Easy diagnosis and effective treatment for thyroid dysfunction is available. Talk to your doctor to find out more information.

For further information

If you would like any further information on thyroid dysfunction, please visit the following websites: www.thyroidweek.com

www.thyroid-fed.org

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