

Our Cultural Thyroid Epidemic

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Here we are again in January, National Thyroid Awareness month. The thyroid, a magnificent butterfly-shaped endocrine gland located in the base of the neck, oversees our body's delivery of energy to the cells. It has been faltering in an ever increasing number of people. As it should. Our thyroid is being asked to do the impossible: to keep us operating in life at break neck speed without care to the consequences.

Our standard health care response is to turn a blind eye as to why the thyroid is depressed, but instead prescribe and consume the hormones that a healthy thyroid should be making. Once again we are trying to override the wisdom of nature. And I can share with you, Mother Nature cannot be fooled. She has an ace up her sleeve and protects the cells from being pushed. I see it all the time in my practice.

I love the visual that Dr. Datis Kharrazian writes of in his book *Why Do I Still Have Thyroid Symptoms?* "The thyroid serves to set the body's speed limit. If you are cold, the thyroid steps on the gas to create more heat. If you have a virus it revs up the engine of your immune system. If you are overly stressed, from too many long hour days fueled by bagels and coffee, the thyroid hits the brakes so that you don't blow a gasket in the fast lane. When the thyroid malfunctions, the question is *not* "how can I get 'er up and running as quickly as possible?" but rather "why on earth is my thyroid mashing the brakes with both feet and yanking on the emergency brake at the same time?"

The thyroid gland is very sensitive to the slightest alternations in the body. I wrote in 2006 about some of the factors that can reduce thyroid function such as adrenal fatigue (caused by stress, poor diet, burning the candle at both ends, skipping meals), liver congestion and soy in the diet. Here are some of the additional aggravations that have been revealed. You can see why thyroid dysfunction is one of our culture and lifestyle.

Antibiotics: 20% of healthy thyroid production is dependant healthy gut flora, the good guys that live and work for us in our digestive tract. The use of antibiotics destroys much of our gut flora, both the good and the bad. Our insistence on repeated use of antibiotics can ultimately reduce thyroid function.

Birth Control and Hormone Replacement Therapy: both of which can lead to estrogen dominance in the body. Estrogen overload inhibits proper thyroid function at a cellular level.

Eating gluten containing foods: only serves to make an autoimmune thyroid (Hashimoto's thyroiditis) all the worse. Choosing to just medicate while leaving the gradual destruction of the thyroid gland unchecked wouldn't be the high road. Gluten *intolerance* (not just celiac disease) is imperative to test and rule in or out.

The overuse of fluorine, chlorine and bromine: these are halogens that are in the same family in the periodic table of elements as iodine. Iodine is an essential trace nutrient needed for proper thyroid function. Fluorine, chlorine and bromine can displace iodine in its binding sites on the cell wall and disrupt thyroid function.

Fluorine/fluoride is added in many city water systems, tooth pastes, dental treatments and fluoride tablets often recommended (incorrectly) for ingestion by our children for cavity prevention.

Chlorine is used abundantly in our drinking, bathing, laundry and Jacuzzi water.

Bromine is often touted and used as the 'chlorine free Jacuzzi disinfectant'. Too, Bromine replaced iodine in the 1980s in the bread-making process and so is prevalent in our baked goods.

Bromine can also be found in pesticides, certain asthma inhalers, prescription drugs, plastic products and personal care products, etc. Read your labels.

Mercury toxicity: although you may have had yours replaced or are too young to have ever had a mercury filling, how many American mouths are filled with mercury and whose bodies aren't still overwhelmed with mercury residues? Mercury diminishes thyroid function by displacing the trace mineral selenium needed for a thyroid hormone T4 conversion to its active and functioning form T3.

And so, my next article...how I find mercury toxicity and how I am able to tell how well your thyroid hormone...medicated or not... is getting across into your cells.

Until then, be good to your thyroid by including iodine rich foods into your diet: seafood, seaweed, dulse and nori.

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