

# YOUR THYROID

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The thyroid makes hormones that travel through your bloodstream and regulate how your body breaks down food and uses it for energy. It is part of the endocrine system, which includes the pituitary gland, hypothalamus, thymus, pineal gland, testes, ovaries, adrenal glands, parathyroid and pancreas.

## ABOUT YOUR THYROID

**The thyroid secretes hormones that help regulate:**

brain development and function

eyes

heart

skin and hair

weight/metabolism

intestine function

The thyroid is governed by the pituitary (called the "master gland"), a pea-sized organ located at the base of the brain.

The thyroid is a butterfly shaped gland at the front of the neck.



## HOW IT WORKS

1

Pituitary gland checks amount of thyroid hormone in blood

2

Pituitary tells thyroid to make more or less hormone so there's always a balanced amount

3

Thyroid uses iodine (mainly from seafood and dairy products) to make thyroid hormone; iodine is absorbed through intestine into bloodstream, then makes its way to thyroid

4

Thyroid disorders occur when something goes wrong with the process, and too much or too little thyroid hormone is produced

# THYROID DISORDERS:

occur when thyroid releases too many (overactive) or too few (underactive) hormones. These disorders frequently run in families, and are more common in women.



## HYPERTHYROIDISM = OVERACTIVE

- Increased bowel movements
- Increased sweating
- Weight loss
- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Vision problems
- Irregular menstruation (light)
- Anxiety/nervousness

## ..... NORMAL THYROID FUNCTION .....



## HYPOTHYROIDISM = UNDERACTIVE

- Constipation
- Intolerance to cold
- Weight gain
- Dry skin, dry hair
- Irregular menstruation (heavy)
- Fatigue

### IF YOU HAVE A THYROID DISORDER:

- ✓ Take your prescribed medication as directed
- ✓ Be aware of drug interactions
- ✓ Have your healthcare provider check for nodules
- ✓ Eat a balanced diet
- ✓ Get enough sleep and exercise



### NODULES

- Lump or swelling in thyroid gland
- No effect on thyroid function, usually no effect on thyroid hormone
- More than 90% are not harmful or dangerous, but some can be cancerous
- Nodules can be detected by a "neck check" by your healthcare provider

### THYROID CANCER

- Most common endocrine cancer
- Occurs in all ages, children through seniors
- No symptoms in early stage
- About two out of every three people diagnosed are between ages 20 and 55

#### Patients have questions. We have answers.

The Hormone Health Network is your trusted source for endocrine patient education. Our free, online resources are available at [hormone.org](http://hormone.org).

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