

Healthy Habits

January 2007

Tips for reaching and maintaining your optimum state of health

January is Thyroid Awareness Month

What is the thyroid?

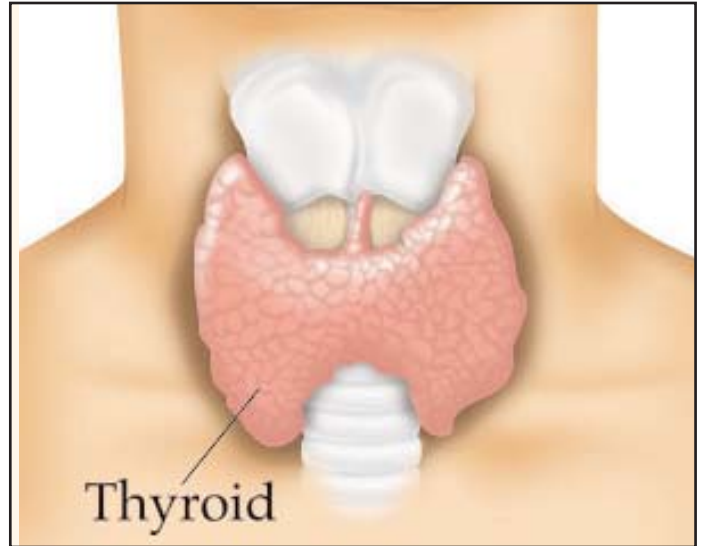
The thyroid gland is a small, butterfly-shaped gland located at the base of your neck just below your Adam's apple. Your thyroid gland helps control the function of your body's metabolism as well as function of many important organs, including your heart, brain, liver, kidneys, and skin. Making sure your thyroid gland is healthy and functioning properly is extremely important to your overall well-being.

The Endocrine system

The thyroid doesn't work alone, however, it is part of the endocrine system. The endocrine system is made up of glands throughout the body which regulate the function, growth and development of virtually every cell, tissue and organ in the body by secreting chemicals called hormones directly into the bloodstream. When endocrine disorders develop, too much or too little hormone is secreted by a specific gland because the gland stops functioning properly due to illness, surgical removal or natural causes. Thyroid dysfunction occurs when the thyroid gland, a small, butterfly-shaped gland located at the base of your neck, produces either too much thyroid hormone, which causes your body's systems to speed up – this is called hyperthyroidism; or too little thyroid hormone, which causes your body's systems to slow down – this is called hypothyroidism, both negatively affecting your overall well-being.

Taking Care of your Thyroid

The first step toward taking control of your thyroid health is identifying whether your thyroid hormone levels are in balance. An online tool has been set up for you at thyroidawareness.com/assessment.php to help assess your current thyroid health. The more you understand about recognizing the symptoms and risk factors of thyroid disease, the better prepared you will be to recognize potential warning signs.



Remember, if your thyroid gland isn't working properly, neither will you.

Are you on your way to a Healthy Thyroid?

Monitoring your thyroid health is key, but alone it's not enough. Help your thyroid stay healthy by keeping iodine, the "fuel" the thyroid needs, in your diet. Iodine is found in iodized table salt, seafood, bread and milk. If the thyroid doesn't get the fuel it needs it will still work harder to try to supply the body's demands, ultimately damaging itself in the process. If you suffer from thyroid deficiencies or hyperactivity, there are effective treatments to manage thyroid disease, so long as you maintain a relationship with your healthcare professional to identify symptoms and treatments, if needed and always follow your doctor's instructions.

Don't Let Your Body Suffer

Though relatively small compared to other organs, the thyroid plays a crucial role in regulating many of your body's key processes. If your thyroid isn't working properly, either overproducing or underproducing, your body, as a whole will suffer. Take the time to learn how to keep your thyroid working well and how to recognize when it isn't. If there is a problem, early warning combined with effective treatment from a qualified physician can get you back on track and running like a well-oiled machine again.

The material contained in Healthy Habits is not intended to be medical advice on any particular matter. Readers should seek appropriate professional advice before acting on the basis of any information contained in this publication. This information is provided courtesy of Optima Health.