

Graves' Disease



What is Graves' Disease?

Graves' disease is an **autoimmune disease** that causes circulating antibodies to **over-stimulate the thyroid gland**, leading to its enlargement and the production of excess thyroid hormones.

It is the **most common form of hyperthyroidism**, and many parts of the body such as eyes, skin, hair, nails, lungs, muscles, nervous system, digestive and reproductive systems can be affected. **Graves' disease symptoms** such as **weight loss, rapid heart beat and anxiety** can occur when there are high levels of thyroid hormones, and can cause numerous health problems.

Graves' disease affects about five in every 10,000 people in the United States. It is more common in women between the ages of 20 and 40, but does occur in infants, children and the elderly. **Graves' disease information** is sometimes contradictory. Although this disorder has a hereditary component, physical trauma, weight reduction and viral illnesses are also associated with Graves' Disease. Your physician will be able to better provide you with the most accurate **Graves' disease information**.

Diagnosing Graves' Disease

Graves' disease symptoms vary, so the following procedures are used to diagnose Graves' disease:

- **Physical Examination** - If your doctor suspects that you have Graves' disease, a thorough physical examination and medical history will be able to confirm the diagnosis.
- **Blood Test** - A simple blood test will measure your thyroid hormone levels, thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) and thyroxine (thyroid hormone). Low levels of TSH and high levels of thyroxine may indicate Graves' Disease.
- **Radioactive Iodine Uptake** - The body needs iodine to produce thyroxine. A radioactive scan or image will determine if the thyroid is making too much or too little thyroxine. A high uptake of radioactive iodine indicates that your thyroid gland is producing too much thyroxine, which is consistent with Graves' disease.

Symptoms of Graves' Disease

Graves' disease symptoms include:



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It is not intended to diagnose or treat any medical condition. Nothing in this ebook is intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this ebook or on ANY website.

- Enlarged thyroid gland (goiter)
- Weight loss
- Nervousness
- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Enlarged bulging eyes (exophthalmos)
- Double vision
- Menstrual irregularities
- Eye irritation
- Intolerance to hot weather
- Excessive sweating
- Shakiness
- Muscle weakness
- Rapid pulse
- Loss of body fat
- Goiter
- Hot, moist skin
- Frequent bowel movements or diarrhea

What is Graves' Ophthalmopathy?

Graves' ophthalmopathy or exophthalmos is also known as **thyroid eye disease** or **thyroid-associated ophthalmopathy**. It is closely associated with Graves' disease. Graves' ophthalmopathy (GO) is a condition that affects the muscles of the eye that rotate the eyeball up, down and to the sides.

The eyes, which bulge from their sockets, are red and watery, and the lids are swollen. Graves' ophthalmopathy causes the eyes to move abnormally because the swollen eye muscles are unable to work precisely. Graves' ophthalmopathy and [Graves' disease](#) are two separate conditions that run independently of each other.

GO may occur long before, at the same time as, or long after thyroid disease is diagnosed and treated. Although most patients with [Graves' disease](#) have **Graves' ophthalmopathy**, about 10% of patients with GO have normal thyroid functioning.

Symptoms of Graves' ophthalmopathy may vary. It is fairly common to display symptoms of redness and irritation. Inflammation, however, can cause permanent damage. Other symptoms include:

- Double vision
- Dryness of the eye
- Eye muscle weakness
- Excessive tearing
- Protrusion of the eyes
- Increased intraocular pressure
- Irritation
- Light sensitivity
- Swelling of the eyelids
- Upper and lower eyelid retraction

What is Graves' Dermopathy?

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Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

Graves' dermatopathy, or pretibial myxedema, is a rare skin disorder associated with Graves' disease. It is characterized by red, swollen skin, often on your shins and on the top of your feet.

The texture of the affected area looks like orange peel. In the early stages, it can be quite itchy, but in time it becomes less itchy and uncomfortable. It does not itch or cause any discomfort unless a larger area of skin is affected.

Although it usually resolves spontaneously over a period of months to years, treatment includes addressing the underlying thyroid problem, and using topical creams and compression with elastic wraps.

What Causes Graves' Disease?

Graves' disease is caused by a malfunctioning of the immune system.

Antibodies that usually protect the body against infections, viruses and bacteria attack the thyroid gland.

The thyroid gland, in turn, produces **excess thyroid hormone**. It is not known what causes the immune system to attack the thyroid gland. A combination of factors such as heredity, sex, age, stress, smoking, and radiation have been implicated as possible triggers for Graves' disease.

Help for Graves' Disease

Various treatments can **restore normal levels of thyroid hormones** and alleviate symptoms. Your choice of treatment will depend on your age, overall condition, and the size of your thyroid gland.

Conventional and alternative approaches to treating this disease should be investigated and discussed with your medical practitioner. If Graves' disease is left untreated, there could be serious implications.

Conventional treatments include **anti-thyroid drugs**, beta-blockers, radioactive iodine, and surgery. The problem with **radical thyroid treatment** such as surgery is that it puts the thyroid out of action permanently. This necessitates lifelong prescriptions of synthetic or animal derived thyroid hormone. Hypothyroid symptoms are often the result.

It is important to note that alternative and natural treatments are available - **without the risk of side effects**. Because we are more than just our symptoms, **natural remedies can assist and promote health on a broader scale**, addressing diet, lifestyle, and stress-management-- and thereby providing overall support.

Natural Treatment for Graves' Disease

Natural cures for Graves' disease address the cause of the problem rather than just addressing the symptoms. The individual with Graves' disease has to be treated uniquely – symptoms and responses to treatment vary from person to person. A number of alternative and natural therapies can be used to help reduce symptoms including:

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A combination of certain herbal and homeopathic ingredients such as Bugleweed (*Lycopus virginica*), Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*), Stephania root (*Stephania tetrandia*), and Motherwort (*Leonurus cardica*) has been used as **natural cures for Graves' disease** to help minimize the unpleasant symptoms associated with **Graves' disease** and hyperthyroidism.

Dietary changes and stress reduction are steps that should be included in your path to wellness. Consulting a health practitioner, homeopath or naturopath will help you to make an informed decision.

The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is **not the only treatment option**. Conventional Western medicine (often called allopathic or orthodox medicine) is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools, and many pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available and freely used-- even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is 'better' than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that **both natural and conventional remedies have a role to play in the treatment program**.

Natural medicine has often been frowned upon by conventional doctors, especially by those who do not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby **providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options** from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, **natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed** by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the **body has an innate capacity to heal itself**. While natural medicines are often called 'alternative' or 'complimentary' medicines, they are, in fact, a **unique and independent form of medicine** in their own right, well able to **treat a variety of conditions**. Perhaps the term 'holistic' medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine. This encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.



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Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a **holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease**. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to **support health** (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer. In many cases, **holistic medicine can accomplish just as much**, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, **natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing**.

In many cases, they can **succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed**. Despite frequent reports that they are ‘unproven’ and ‘untested’, the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a **long history of usage** and there is a **wealth of empirical evidence** to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to **support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines**.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines **must be manufactured in the correct way**, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately, **not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards**, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called ‘standardized’ extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While **‘standardized’ extracts** may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have **grave disadvantages**, including an increase in side effects, as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which **retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb** as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, **always choose wisely**. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life-threatening condition, don’t make changes without first discussing them with your doctor, in order that your condition may be monitored. **Well-informed and supportive practitioners will support patients** who

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want to take responsibility for their own health.

Tips for Coping with Graves' Disease

Living with [Graves' disease](#) can be challenging, and [Graves' disease information](#) is sometimes hard to interpret. Here are some helpful tips to help you better manage this condition:

- Eat a diet containing adequate (but not too much) iodine (e.g. fish). Avoid food with added iodine (salt), as well as too much food containing seaweed (e.g. sushi).
- Eat plenty of raw cruciferous vegetables such as cabbage, brussels sprouts, cauliflower and broccoli, which all contain natural thyroid blockers.
- Try to get as much rest as possible.
- Begin an exercise program.
- Establish open communication channels with health professionals.
- Include essential fatty acids in your diet like flax seed oil and omega-3 to help reduce inflammatory responses.
- Have regular screenings for hyperthyroidism if there is someone in your immediate family with this disease or you have another autoimmune disease.
- Essential oils that may have a calming effect include Bergamot, Clary sage, Lavender and Roman Chamomile.
- Manage your stress as it is one of the triggers of hyperthyroidism – try meditating, practicing tai chi, yoga or prayer therapy.
- Identify and maintain emotional support systems.

Related Natural Remedies:

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