

## Hyperthyroidism



### What is Hyperthyroidism?

Hyperthyroidism is often referred to as an **overactive thyroid** and is a disorder of the thyroid, a small gland located just below the Adam's Apple.

This gland **influences many of your bodily functions**, such as physical growth and development, puberty, metabolism, organ function, fertility and body temperature. Just how well the thyroid regulates these functions depends on the production of two specific hormones, called T3 and T4.

The thyroid works in conjunction with the pituitary gland in the brain. When the level of natural thyroid hormones drops too low, the gland in the brain produces **Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH)** which tells the healthy thyroid gland to produce more hormones.

However, when the thyroid gland produces too much of these hormones, our bodies use energy faster than they should. And because the thyroid controls vital systems such as metabolism and body temperature, an **overactive thyroid** (hyperthyroidism) will affect the body, causing a variety of related symptoms.

### Diagnosing Hyperthyroidism

A sample of blood is the best screening method of testing for hyperthyroidism. Your health care professional will want to test the levels of T4 and T3 (the thyroid hormones) as well as the levels of TSH in your blood.

These blood tests will provide an accurate picture of how the thyroid is functioning. If the doctor feels further tests are necessary they may give a **radioactive iodine uptake test**. The type of radioactive iodine used for the test will not harm the thyroid or pose any risk. After 24 hours special equipment is then used to measure the amount of radioactivity over the thyroid gland.

### Symptoms of Hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism symptoms vary and may include the following:

- Nervousness, mood swings or feeling anxious
- Fatigue
- Tremors such as shaky hands
- Rapid heart beat
- Difficulty breathing
- Sweating more than usual or having a warm, red, itchy skin
- Experiencing more bowel movements than usual

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

- Hair becoming brittle or falling out
- Losing weight regardless of the amount of food you eat

## What Causes Hyperthyroidism?

The most common causes of [hyperthyroidism](#) include:

- **Graves' disease** - Caused when the body's natural immune system attacks the thyroid gland. The thyroid fights back by making too much thyroid hormone.
- **Thyroid nodules** - The thyroid may sometimes develop lumps and cysts called nodules. These nodules can secrete too much thyroid hormone. Most nodules are generally harmless but if you feel a lump it is best to have it checked by a health professional.
- **Thyroiditis** - Caused by inflammation of the thyroid gland, this condition can also lead to the release of excess amounts of thyroid hormones.
- **Excessive iodine intake** - Too much iodine in the diet, certain iodine medications and some cough syrups may cause the thyroid to produce either too much or too little hormone in some individuals. However, the human system can tolerate relatively large doses of iodine and [hyperthyroidism](#) as a response to excess iodine in the diet is very rare.

## Help for Hyperthyroidism

Thyroid disorders are very common, and with appropriate treatment, troublesome [hyperthyroidism symptoms](#) can be alleviated, balanced and treated. There are a number of **treatment options for [hyperthyroidism](#)** and because everyone is different, it is important to explore the options that work for you.

There are various treatments available for [hyperthyroidism](#). The aim of these treatments is to **decrease the amount of thyroid hormone** made by the thyroid gland so that excess amounts do not get into the bloodstream.

The most common conventional treatments include radioactive iodine, betablockers, anti-thyroid medications and surgery (thyroidectomy).

Alternative treatments offer a wide variety of methods to help maintain balance in the body, for example **homeopathy, acupuncture, physical medicine and massage**. They have been used for centuries, and now more than ever before, the Western community is embracing this holistic approach of healthcare.

This holistic approach addresses not only the symptoms of [hyperthyroidism](#), but they address the **root cause and underlying problems** and can help provide all-round support and natural health.

There are a number of **herbal and homeopathic ingredients** which may be of assistance without the negative side effects of prescription drugs. Some commonly used herbs traditionally used to calm the [overactive thyroid](#) include bugleweed (*Lycopus virginica*), lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) and motherwort (*Leonuris*

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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.

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Natural remedies can also be investigated as part of a broader treatment plan. It is best to discuss these options with your doctor or consult a homeopath or naturopath for advice. Also, it is important to **incorporate a healthy diet, exercise, meditation and other mind-body therapies** to get the maximum benefit.

## Drug Therapies for Hyperthyroidism

Conventional medications for mild [hyperthyroidism](#) include anti-thyroid drugs such as methimazole (Tapazole) or propylthiouracil (PTU). For advanced [hyperthyroidism](#), conventional methods such as radioactive iodine treatment (RAI) are commonly used.

While on these medications, you should be closely monitored due to the frequency of **unwanted side effects**. As an incorrect choice or dosage of drugs can cause other distressing symptoms, or even make symptoms worse, it is strongly advised that you research these drugs thoroughly and make an informed decision.

When conventional drug therapy for **overactive thyroid** is not successful, thyroidectomy or surgical removal of the thyroid is sometimes recommended. After this procedure, the body is no longer able to produce thyroid hormones, which then have to be supplemented by synthetic hormones or hormones of animal origin (bovine or porcine). It may be difficult to achieve the correct balance and many people suffer from symptoms of hypothyroidism after a thyroidectomy.

## Pregnancy and Hyperthyroidism

If you are pregnant and suspect that you may have [hyperthyroidism](#), it is essential that you seek a professional assessment. Diagnosis and appropriate treatment is very important as [hyperthyroidism](#) in pregnancy can be dangerous for both the mother and the baby.

In some pregnant women [hyperthyroidism](#) is a pre-existing condition. However, [hyperthyroidism](#) can also develop during pregnancy. Diagnosis is usually more difficult as pregnancy can mask the symptoms. For example, fatigue and weight gain are routinely experienced with pregnancy. Blood tests for T3 and T4 may also be inaccurate during pregnancy.

The most common cause of [hyperthyroidism](#) in pregnant women is Grave's Disease with symptoms occurring during the first half of pregnancy. In most instances, mild to moderate [hyperthyroidism](#) during pregnancy will not cause problems for mom or baby – and the pregnancy can be expected to progress normally. However, severe and chronic [hyperthyroidism](#) may cause a variety of more serious complications and a correct diagnosis and treatment is therefore vital.

It is important to ask whether certain prescription medications may be passed through the placenta to your baby, and what effect this may have on your child. While prescription medication can be effective as part of a broader treatment plan, it is not always necessary.

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## Tips for Coping with Hyperthyroidism

There are always a few steps we can take to empower ourselves and manage our health. Small measures can be taken to alleviate and reduce [hyperthyroidism symptoms](#).

Try to:

- Reduce stress by listening to music, taking a long bath or meditating in a quiet place
- Avoid caffeine and other stimulants as they may worsen certain symptoms such as fast heartbeat, nervousness, or concentration difficulties
- Ice packs on the throat can help to reduce inflammation
- Certain foods can help to depress the thyroid, for instance cruciferous vegetables (e.g. cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, brussels sprouts, spinach)
- Stay away from refined foods, shellfish, wheat, dairy products and alcohol
- Avoid food and supplements containing iodine

The better we take care of our bodies, the better they will take care of us. Remember that healthy eating habits, adequate sleep and regular exercise will go a long way in sustaining good health and wellbeing!

## 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 medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox 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 have a role to play in the treatment program.

Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did 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



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and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

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 and that, 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. These include 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

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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 want to take responsibility for their own health.

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