

Thyroid Disease

January is National Thyroid Month and TRTA members need to be aware of the symptoms which differ between hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism. Symptoms including fatigue, unexplained weight change, a racing heart and other signs may indicate a thyroid disorder. The thyroid is a gland found near the base of the neck. This gland secretes three hormones which influence the metabolic rate and protein synthesis.

Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) and hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid) often have opposite effects.

Hypothyroidism occurs when your thyroid produces fewer hormones than your body needs. Symptoms include: fatigue, weight gain, puffy face, always feeling cold, joint and muscle pain, constipation, dry skin or hair, depression, decreased sweating and brain fog.

Hyperthyroidism occurs when your body produces more hormones than your body needs. Symptoms include: nervousness or irritability, fatigue and difficulty sleeping, muscle weakness, trouble tolerating heat, tremor usually in your hands, rapid and irregular heartbeat, frequent bowel movements or diarrhea and weight loss.

There are other rare signs which could point to a thyroid disorder. These include low cholesterol, rashes and bulging eyes.

To understand your thyroid condition, a healthcare provider may:

Give you a physical exam including asking about your medical history and details about your symptoms.

Give you a blood test to check your thyroid levels.

Order imaging tests, such as a thyroid scan or ultrasound.

Treatments for a thyroid disorder will differ depending on an underactive or overactive thyroid. Hypothyroidism may be treated with hormone replacement therapy.

Hyperthyroidism may be treated with antithyroid medications and beta-blockers.

Radioactive therapy may be used, and in rare cases, surgery.

If you have symptoms, contact your healthcare provider. Symptoms can improve with the appropriate medications.

Source: Mary Shomon, "Thyroid Disease Symptoms", August 30, 2023. Reviewed by Do-Eun Lee, MD for Verywell Health, 2023 Dotdash Media Inc.