

EATING FOR THYROID HEALTH

Becoming actively engaged in your own health and wellness is one of the most empowering gifts you can give yourself. More and more people today have hormone imbalances and autoimmune conditions and don't know what to do.

While it should always fall to a medical practitioner to heal a thyroid condition, there's nothing to stop you in gaining the knowledge and empowerment to ask doctors the right questions and search out the best treatment.

You can also make dietary choices that may support thyroid health. Anyone with a thyroid condition should always consult his or her healthcare provider before making any changes in diet. The following dietary recommendations may be helpful to consider.

1 Choose the right type and amount of carbohydrates.

When it comes to thyroid health, moderation is often key in terms of carbohydrates. Too much or too little can be problematic. Generally, a good amount of carbohydrates for thyroid health is about 20-25% of a person's diet. But, as always, bio-individuality will determine any person's ideal macronutrient ratios.

Carbohydrates should predominantly be complex and come from whole foods. Crowd out processed flours and sugar with vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Many people find a gluten-free diet to be supportive of thyroid health.

2 Eat a diet rich in minerals.

The thyroid is dependent on iodine and selenium. Deficiency in one or both of these minerals can cause thyroid issues. A doctor can test for iodine and selenium levels. If results indicate a deficiency, these are best supplemented through the diet. Iodine is found in sea vegetables and wild-caught fish. Selenium can be obtained through Brazil nuts (no more than 2 per day), mushrooms, chia seeds, and organic red meat.

3 Load up on fresh vegetables.

We don't have to tell you that vegetables are good for your health. But, it's worth mentioning that cruciferous veggies are considered goitrogens, which are foods that can cause the thyroid to enlarge and sometimes malfunction. There is mixed evidence about this, but we can all agree that vegetables have tons of health benefits. When eaten properly, the good can outweigh the bad.

Eating an abundance of raw cruciferous vegetables can be dangerous for a person with thyroid issues. But, as long as a person's iodine levels are adequate, he or she should be fine to eat these in moderation. For thyroid health, these nutritional powerhouses should be eaten cooked or fermented.

Cruciferous vegetables include: Bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collard greens, and kale.

4 Support the gut with fermented foods.

Fermented foods support gut health, and gut health supports thyroid health. Try adding a tablespoon or two of sauerkraut or kimchi to meals each day. Kombucha and kefir are fermented beverages loaded with healthy bacteria that support gut health.

5 Consume a moderate amount of healthy fat.

It's said that a diet rich in healthy fat is good for the thyroid. But, diets that are very high in fat – for example, the ketogenic diet – have been linked to thyroid dysfunction. Consume omega-3 fatty acids from wild-caught fish, walnuts, and flaxseeds.

6 Crowd out gluten and dairy.

Gluten and dairy are inflammatory. Individuals with autoimmune conditions, such as Hashimoto's thyroiditis, are advised to avoid gluten because it can initiate the production of thyroid antibodies.

These types of foods can also be thyroid disruptors. The molecular structure of the proteins found in both gluten and dairy resemble the thyroid. This is called *molecular mimicry*. If your immune system is reacting to either of these, it may also attack the thyroid.

7 Avoid thyroid disruptors in the environment.

Many everyday products contain chemicals that can get into the bloodstream and disrupt the thyroid. These include chlorine, plastic containers, pesticides, and non-organic sunscreen. Plastic food and drink containers should be swapped out for glass. Also, beware of food cans lined with BPA, as well as conventional cleaning products. Make swaps for greener and healthier alternatives whenever possible.

8 Limit foods with heavy metals.

Heavy metals, like mercury, can contribute to the development of autoimmune conditions. Mercury lurks in a lot of places, but one area that's easy to spot and control is our seafood. Fish tends to be high in mercury. Ahi and albacore tuna, king mackerel, swordfish, and Gulf tilefish are some of the top offenders. These should be approached with caution, limited for special occasions, and consumed in moderation. The fish with the lowest mercury levels are salmon, cod, tilapia, and catfish.

A healthcare provider can test for heavy metal levels in the body.