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5 ways to manage your diet and lifestyle to prevent thyroid imbalance

by VASUDHA RAI

MAY 17, 2018



Important health know-how



Image: Greg Kadel

Hormonal disorders seem to be the side effect of modern day living, your diet included. Along with PCOD and PCOS, thyroid abnormalities have become more common than ever before. While the cause of this condition was mostly genetic earlier, people are prone to thyroid problems these days, whether it runs in the family or not. And much has to do with how we eat and live. “Environmental factors affect the gland—so pesticides, household cleaners, environmental pollution and eating out of plastic are all responsible for it,” says Dr Nigma Talib, London-based naturopathic doctor to celebrities such as Emilia Fox and Sienna Miller, and author of the book *Reverse The Signs of Ageing*. “In addition, certain medications, cigarettes and certain deficiencies can also increase its

chances.” There are different types of thyroid issues that can happen over time. “They can range from small enlarged glands to life-threatening cancer.” However, the main type is hypothyroidism or an under-active thyroid.

“I’ve noticed that a lot of it is caused by the autoimmune Hashimoto disease (in which the immune system attacks the thyroid gland).” She explains that it all boils down to the gut. “When we see people with an autoimmune condition, it’s due to high levels of stress that can cause a leaky gut.” When we have a leaky gut, the food particles are no longer contained in the intestines, but leak into the body. “The immune system starts attacking these particles assuming they’re foreign bodies, and this causes inflammation.”

Symptoms of an under-active thyroid include feeling cold quite often, changes in body weight (weight gain for under-active and weight loss for excess), dry skin, achy joints, anxiety, constipation and depressive symptoms such as fatigue. The great news is that with the right diet and supplements you can reduce its effects. Dr Talib tells us how.

Reduce stress

As we get older our hormones decline. “In my medical

opinion, people who are chronically under stress are more prone to thyroid.” Consistent stress depletes the adrenal glands that support the thyroid. “So, when it’s stressed it can’t support the thyroid the way it usually does.” It’s important to consciously aim to work and live in a harmonious environment, or develop practices that help you disconnect with stress.

Improve gut health

She says that the best diet tip is to avoid gluten, sugar, dairy, and sweet alcohol, as all of these increase inflammation in the body. In addition, eat fibrous fruits, vegetables and beans that work as prebiotics to provide food for the good bacteria in the gut. “White beans are a great source of iron, which is also necessary for the activity of the thyroid.” Once you cut out inflammatory foods and improve your diet, add a good probiotic to the mix. Dr Nigma Talib’s Healthy Flora contains B-vitamins and grape seed extract along with 20 billion live bacteria. “There are also some articles that say cruciferous vegetables are bad for thyroid, but I don’t agree with that.”

Reduce inflammation

“Oily fish like salmon or mackerel are naturally anti-

inflammatory, or [you can try] good quality fish oil supplements.” You can also eat fresh turmeric root—either boiled into almond milk with a pinch of pepper, or blitzed into your smoothie. Pepper increases the absorption of turmeric in the body; thus, both always go well together. “You can also add a green juice that will help boost your glutathione levels, and help your liver detox itself.” A mix she suggests: spinach, cucumber, celery and lime.

Look out for missing minerals in your diet

“A big one is selenium deficiency, as it’s not found in the soil today.” She suggests eating two Brazil nuts every day as they are high in selenium amounts. “Also increase iodine via sea salt and sea weed.” Copper is also an essential mineral for thyroid. “There are food sources like spinach, beet, asparagus, and mushrooms [that are rich in copper]; you can also drink water out of a copper glass.” However, to really get a proper dose, she suggests taking it in pill form in combination with zinc. She recommends Thyroid Support Complex by Pure Encapsulations that she recommends to all patients with an under-active thyroid. “But you always want speak to your doctor before taking any supplement.”

Get the required vitamin D

“This is extremely important, because people with low [vitamin D](#) are more prone to thyroid.” Vitamin D is an anti-inflammatory, making it excellent for anyone with an autoimmune disease. “Even if your blood levels of vitamin D are normal, you may still be experiencing symptoms because of the thyroid.” She recommends 1,000 to 5,000iu a day, but only after you consult your doctor.

Vasudha Rai is a certified yoga teacher and has been writing on beauty, health and wellness for 15 years.

Find her at [Vbeauty.co](#)

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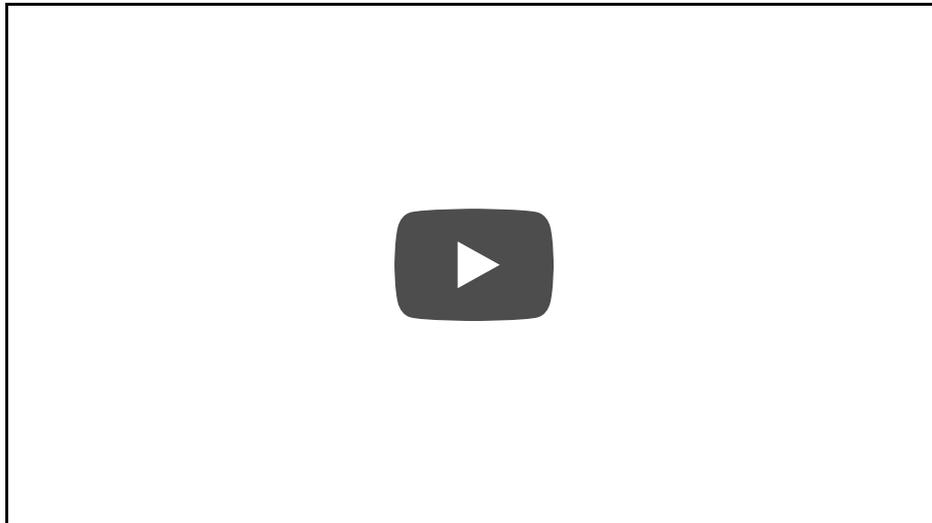
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