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THYROID HEALTH 101:
IS YOUR THYROID DOING ITS JOB?

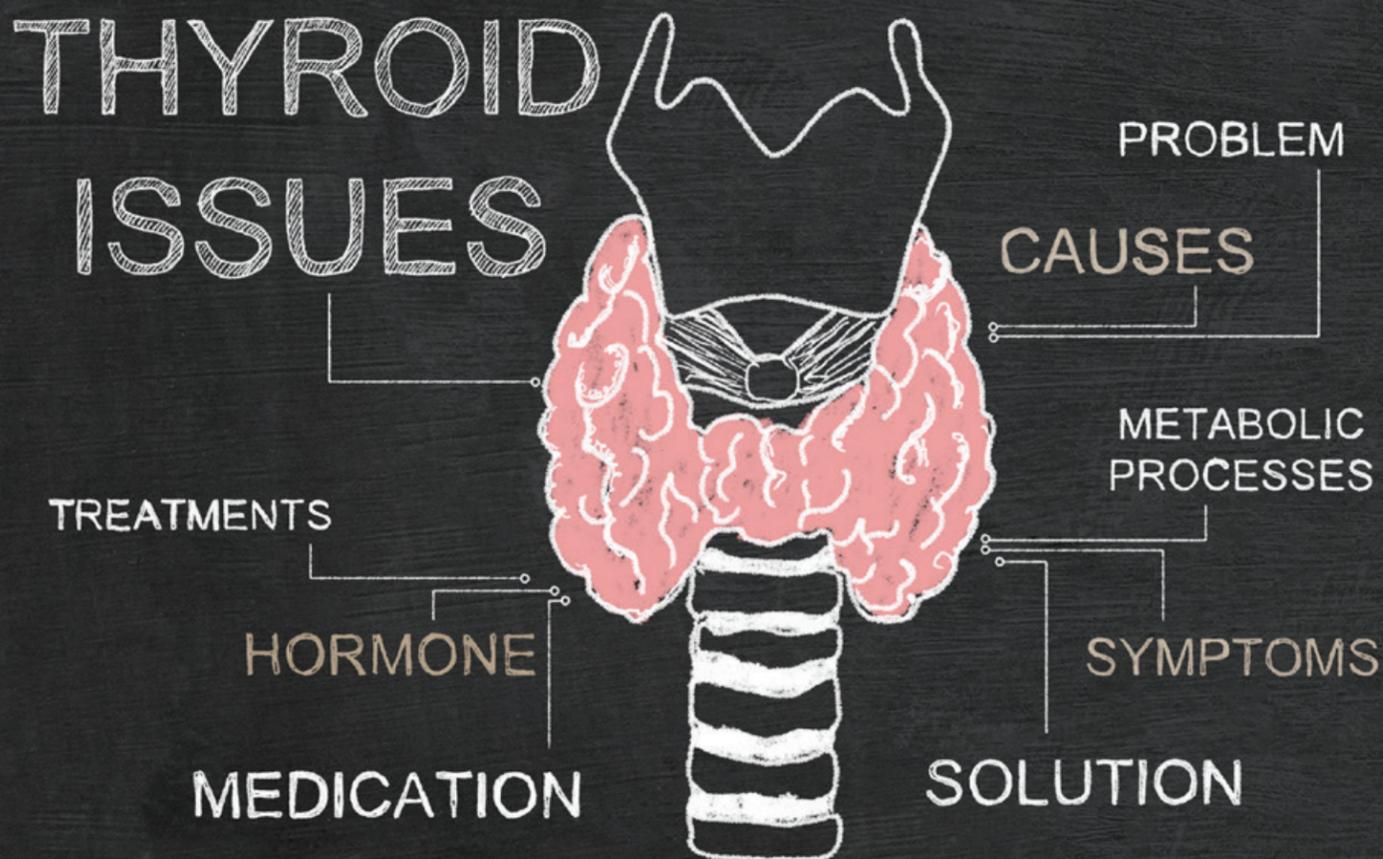
MEDISYS CLIENT TESTIMONIAL
JIM MITCHELL

HEALTHY RECIPES FROM
AROUND THE WORLD

WHY DESK JOBS CAN BE DEADLY

Thyroid Health 101: Is your thyroid doing its job?

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WHAT IS THE THYROID GLAND AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

The thyroid gland is a small butterfly-shaped organ located at the front of the neck. It is involved in numerous physiological and metabolic processes in the body, including: heart rate, body temperature, carbohydrate metabolism, blood cholesterol levels, body weight, menstrual cycles, and muscle mass, amongst others. According to the Thyroid Foundation of Canada, about 1 in 10 Canadians suffer from a thyroid condition. Of those, as many as 50% are unaware of their thyroid condition; interestingly, thyroid disorders are much more common in women (according to the US Department of Health and Human Services).

The thyroid gland produces the hormones T3 and T4 which act as the main messengers of the thyroid in the body. The thyroid gland responds to Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone (TSH) released by the pituitary gland that tells the thyroid how much T3 and T4 to produce. When your levels of T3 or T4 are too low and your TSH is high, you may have hypothyroidism. Your underactive thyroid makes your metabolism slow. On the contrary, if your levels of T3 and T4 are too high and your TSH is low, you may have hyperthyroidism.

Untreated thyroid diseases can lead to many long-term complications such as the development of type 1 or type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, chronic inflammation, decreased bone density, dementia, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, etc. People with hyperthyroidism may also experience impaired digestion due to decreased pancreatic enzyme secretion.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HYPO- OR HYPERTHYROIDISM?

Thyroid hormones control how your body uses energy and a lack of those hormones can throw off many of your body's functions.

Individuals with hypothyroidism often experience weight gain - even with proper diet and exercise - constipation, hair loss, slow heart rate, trouble sleeping, tiredness and fatigue, difficulty concentrating, mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety, constant feeling of being cold, to name just a few. The symptoms of hyperthyroidism, on the other hand, can include: weight loss, diarrhea, rapid heart rate, anxiety, weakness and fatigue, irritability, insomnia and more.

People having a thyroid condition often feel misunderstood by those around them as it can be hard to understand thyroid conditions if you don't have one. Your coworkers, friends and family may not realize how much it can impact your everyday life, and your symptoms may not be taken seriously with people questioning how bad can you really feel when you look fine?

HOW CAN DIET HELP WITH A THYROID CONDITION?

If you have been diagnosed with hypo- or hyperthyroidism, it is important to follow your doctor's orders on how to medically treat your condition. But adopting the following dietary recommendations can also help you better manage your symptoms and keep your thyroid healthy.

HYPOTHYROIDISM:

When your thyroid isn't working at full capacity, your metabolism tends to be slower, and you may find that you gain weight more easily. The weight gain may not necessarily be from fat; it can also be the result of water and salt retention. You may want to follow an energy-controlled diet to promote healthy weight management until your thyroid hormone levels are stabilized. **Here are some tips from your Registered Dietitians:**

- Fill 1/2 your plate with vegetables at lunch and dinner (especially orange or dark green vegetables such as kale, spinach, broccoli, squash, carrots, etc.). These contain essential vitamins and minerals that support thyroid health, as well as fiber which will help you feel satisfied after a meal.

- Have fish and seafood at least 2-3 times per week. These are high in selenium and iodine; minerals that are required for thyroid hormone production. Ideas include salmon, cod, anchovies, sea bass, mackerel, sardines, tuna, and halibut.

- Ensure that you have a source of lean protein at every meal (e.g. eggs, beef, pork, chicken, turkey or fish) which will provide you with selenium, iodine, zinc, vitamin A and vitamin B12.

- Aim for 2-3 portions of low-fat dairy products every day for your dose of riboflavin, vitamin B12 and vitamin D.

- Integrate legumes and nuts in your weekly menu. Nuts (such as brazil nuts and cashews) provide various vitamins and minerals integral to thyroid health.

- Choose whole grains (such as brown rice, fortified fiber-rich breakfast cereals) over refined grains for added micronutrients. If you are interested in learning more about how to meet your daily micronutrient needs through food, try our [4 week micronutrient challenge!](#)
- Add 1 tbsp. of wheat germ daily either to your yogurt, cereals or salad, for an added zinc boost.
- Limit added sugar, and fats, fast food and processed food.
- If you feel you are not meeting your daily mineral requirements through food sources, consult a Registered

Dietitian who will guide you through your food choices based on your likes and dislikes and discuss your needs for supplements.

- Make sure you leave a 4 hour gap between consuming certain mineral supplements (calcium, iron, zinc or magnesium), fiber or psyllium supplements, soy-containing foods, and walnuts, and taking your thyroid medication.
- Do not drink coffee within 1 hour of taking your thyroid medication.



“Goitrogens” can interfere with thyroid hormone production or utilization, and can contribute to the development of goiter in individuals with hypothyroidism if eaten in substantial quantities. Goitrogens can be found in cruciferous vegetables (bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, collard greens, kale, spinach, rutabaga, turnip), certain fruits and starchy plants (corn, cassava, sweet potatoes, millet, peanuts, peaches, pears, strawberries) and soy-based foods (tofu, tempeh, edamame, soy beverage).

While it is not necessary for individuals with thyroid conditions to avoid these foods, there are a few strategies to help limit the effects of goitrogenic foods to support optimal thyroid health:

1. Vary the types of fruits and vegetables you eat every day to avoid overconsumption of any particular goitrogen-rich food in one day.
2. Cook goitrogen-rich vegetables and foods to promote deactivation of goitrogens.



HYPERTHYROIDISM:

For individuals with hyperthyroidism, energy needs may be increased from 10% to up to 60% in severe cases. A high-energy, high-protein diet may be beneficial, especially if you have noticed weight and/or muscle loss:

- Have at least 3 meals and 3 snacks every day.
- Increase your protein intake by consuming legumes, meat, fish, eggs or dairy products at every meal. These will provide you with iron, zinc, thiamin and vitamin B12 which are essential nutrients for thyroid health.
- Be sure to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables to ensure adequate vitamin C intake and absorption.
- As needed, include healthy high-energy foods in your daily diet such as nuts and seeds, cheese, avocado, heart-healthy oils (such as olive oil, canola oil), etc. Once your hyperthyroidism is under control, you won't need to continue following a high-energy, high-protein diet.
- Having hyperthyroidism increases your risk of developing osteoporosis, so be sure to consume 4 servings of different calcium-rich products every day (dairy or alternatives, tofu, black-eyed peas, etc.), as well as enough vitamin D. Vitamin D will facilitate calcium's absorption, thereby reducing your risk of osteoporosis.
- You may need to take a supplement of calcium and/or vitamin D to meet your needs - always verify with your doctor or registered dietitian before taking a supplement.
- Add 1 tbsp. of wheat germ daily to your cereal, yogurt, salad or in baking for a boost of zinc, vitamin E and phosphorus.
- Taking high doses of iodine with anti-thyroid medication can have an additive effect and lead to hypothyroidism. Limit your use of iodized table salt and seaweed. You can continue eating seafood and fish, even if they contain iodine.
- If you take natural supplements or multivitamins, make sure to read the label. Some of them may contain iodine in the ingredients. Choose one containing less than 100 micrograms of iodine.

DON'T FORGET TO EXERCISE!

Even if exercising is probably the last thing on your mind when you have an under- or hyperactive thyroid, it can help reduce the symptoms of thyroid diseases, by improving your metabolism, maintaining a healthy weight, and boosting your energy levels.

HYPOTHYROIDISM:

- Exercise can help alleviate symptoms of fatigue and depression, as well as help you to maintain a healthy weight. It can also make your body more responsive to thyroid hormones.
- If you are feeling limited by your fatigue, start with gentle exercises, such as yoga, tai chi, water aerobics and walking.
- Integrate light to moderate exercise 30 min daily, 5 times a week.

HYPERTHYROIDISM:

- Intense physical exercise (such as running, racket sports, and training on cardiovascular machines) should be limited due to its excess stress on the body, at least until your symptoms are well managed.
- Moderate exercise (such as walking and swimming) is usually well tolerated and is recommended to help alleviate fatigue, anxiety, and sleep disturbances. It also helps maintain strong bones and muscles.
- Integrate moderate exercise 30 min daily, 5 times a week.

Consult your doctor before beginning any exercise program. Note that exercise can help you reduce the symptoms of thyroid diseases but should not replace your medical treatment.

Got questions? Email us at bookings@medisys.ca to connect with one of our registered dietitians, call us at 1 800 361-3493, or [click here](#) to complete a booking request form for preventive health services.





MEDISYS CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

JIM MITCHELL

Q: TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF AND WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO MEDISYS.

A: When I first started coming to Medisys over 27 years ago I was a local leader for a business unit at the company where I worked at the time. I was very fortunate to work for a company that cared about their employees' health and offered such a wonderful benefit. When I reached my last nine years of work before retirement I was travelling 200+ days and in excess of 200,000 miles a year. Being constantly jet lagged, rushing from plane to plane and eating at irregular times, I was not living the healthiest possible lifestyle and it was hard to find time to attend my annual Medisys assessments. For this reason, I started to schedule my annual visits around late December when I was sure to be back in Canada for the holidays. Collecting that health information year over year was far too valuable to skip!

Q: TELL US ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH MEDISYS OVER THE YEARS?

A: When I was 45, following my annual Medisys visit, I had my first colonoscopy. Several polyps were found and although not all polyps turn into cancer, colon cancers can start from polyps. I felt lucky to have caught the polyps at such an early stage since most colonoscopies aren't scheduled until later in life. If I hadn't visited Medisys for my preventive assessment, something far more serious may have been found later on. I am now 67 and retired for 5 years. Over the years I have had to lose weight, workout, manage stress levels, and improve sleep all to avoid developing serious health issues. I've learned that my best results come about when I track my performance and aim to improve year over year. My routines today involve biking swimming and counting steps which I can easily measure and record. As I age my goal is to stay as vibrant as possible and a healthy lifestyle that focuses on prevention is a big part of making that happen.

Q: WHAT WOULD YOU TELL OTHERS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR MEDISYS SERVICES THROUGH THEIR COMPANY BUT DON'T TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT?

A: If you have the opportunity to benefit from annual Medisys preventive health assessments, you need to take advantage of it NOW. Cars built in the 60's offered warning lights. If your engine was too hot, a red light came on. When you apply that kind thinking to your health - only seeking a solution once symptoms have shown up - then you're not doing yourself justice. Cars today alert you when you need to go in for a checkup. The Medisys approach is similar in that it takes a preventive approach to your health to spot problems before they become serious medical issues. If you prioritize your health today you'll be sure to benefit from it down the road.

Q: COMMENT ON HOW MEDISYS HAS CHANGED YOUR APPROACH TO HEALTH.

A: Prevention is about being proactive. Medisys has taught me about the power of prevention through tracking, measurement, and making educated improvements. We are each in control of what we eat, how much we sleep, our levels of exercise, and more. But at the end of the day our power to improve is controlled by our motivation to live a healthier life. Medisys can provide the information, tracking and education required to live a life focused on prevention and good health. Your responsibility rests simply in maintaining your personal level of motivation. If you can do that, your future self will thank you.

Q: WHAT DO YOU DO TO MAKE SURE YOU LIVE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AND WHY?

A: My lifestyle is really built around being better every year. My focus is on education, fitness, activity, and nutrition. I am from a family that is pretty focused on health so discussions about food trends, probiotics, supplements etc. are everyday topics. There is so much literature available that the challenge is sorting through the material for the nuggets that make sense for your life. Find what applies to you and your goals, and then dig in!

Q: HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE THE MEDISYS APPROACH TO THE OTHER TYPES OF HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCES YOU'VE ENCOUNTERED?

A: I have used five different healthcare systems (Canadian, American, British, French and Swiss) and know the difference in all of them. The one thing I would say about all systems is that we all need to take control of our lifestyle and work hard to avoid the big health issues that can impact our lives in a major way. So many modern day diseases are results of poor diet and lifestyle. Get informed, take your annual Medisys visit seriously, read and apply key learnings to your life. Take control.

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

A: It's important to acknowledge that nobody is perfect, and that health is about making good choices that bring you closer to your health goals. I am a work in progress getting better every day.

HEALTHY RECIPES FROM AROUND THE WORLD



By Pui Chi Cheng, RD, Medisys Toronto and Alissa Vieth, RD, Medisys Toronto

Did you say fish? Fish is packed full of important nutrients. It is generally lower in saturated fat than meat, but has higher level of heart healthy, immune boosting and anti-inflammatory unsaturated fats. It is recommended that you

consume at least 2 servings (3oz / 75g each) of fatty fish per week for its omega-3 content. Great sources of fatty fish include salmon, char, trout, and mackerel.

FISH AND MERCURY

The risk of mercury exposure from fish is generally low in Canada. However, certain fish have greater mercury concentration and should be consumed no more than 2 servings per week. Consumption of fresh/frozen tuna, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and escolar, aka "butterfish", should be limited to prevent mercury over-exposure.

COOKING FISH

You can prepare fish in the oven, barbecue or stove top. Try using dill, fennel, parsley, lemon juice, salt and pepper to help bring out the natural delicious flavors of fish. You can tell when fish is ready when you can flake it easily with a fork. If you feel adventurous, try these ethnic fish recipes to put a spin on your fish dishes!

FEATURE RECIPES:

GINGER-SCALLION STEAMED FISH



This dish is a common dish in Asian cuisine and it is very simple to make. You can buy a whole fish or a fish fillet. White fish like tilapia, cod and halibut generally works great but you can try other types of fish too. Recipe is per serving. Original recipe sourced from "the woks of life"

Ingredients:

- 2 scallions
- 2 tbsp julienned fresh ginger
- 1.5 tbsp soy sauce
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp sugar
- 2 Tbsp water
- 1 medium tilapia, grey sole, flounder or fluke fillet
- 2 Tbsp oil

Cooking Instructions:

1. Julienne the scallions and ginger and set aside. Combine the soy sauce, salt, sugar and water in a small bowl and set aside too.
2. Fill about an inch of water in a large saucepan and place a metal elevated steamer rack in the middle of the pot. Bring water to a boil.
3. Lay the fish flat on a plate and transfer it on top of the steamer rack when the water is boiling. Cover and steam for about 10 minutes or until fish flakes easily. Turn off heat and remove the plate from the saucepan. Drain any excess water from the plate.
4. In a small saucepan, heat up oil and brown scallion and ginger slightly. Add soy sauce mixture. Cook until the scallions are wilted. Remove from heat and pour over fish. Serve while warm.



RED THAI SALMON CURRY

Homemade Red Thai Salmon Curry is a simple dish that can be on the table in 20 minutes. This hearty one pot meal satisfies and nourishes without all the added sugar, sodium and calories that come with takeout Thai food. Red curry paste is available in the international section of many grocery stores.

There is room for you to add the vegetables you have on hand (try broccoli, carrots, mushroom) and adjust the spice level (just add a more chili flakes for more heat).

Recipe serves 4

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp avocado or coconut oil
- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp fresh ginger, minced
- 2 Tbsp Thai red curry paste
- 1 - 14-oz can coconut milk
- 1/4 cup cilantro leaves and stems, minced
- 1 orange bell pepper, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 medium zucchini, cut into 3/4 inch chunks
- 100g of green beans, trimmed and cut in half
- Pinch of cayenne or chili flakes (omit for mild spice or more for additional spice)
- 500 g (1 lb) salmon, chopped into 1 inch cubes and any skin removed

To serve: Sprinkle with fresh cilantro leaves

Cooking Instructions:

1. Heat oil in a large pan over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic and ginger and cook, stirring for 2-3 minutes, until onions are translucent. Add the curry paste and cook, stirring for 1 minute.
2. Add the coconut milk, and bring to a boil.
3. Reduce to a simmer and add bell pepper, green beans, cilantro, chili flakes and simmer for 5 minutes.
4. Then add in the salmon and gently simmer for an additional 5 minutes until the fish flakes easily and the vegetables are tender.
5. Serve over steamed rice, quinoa or cauliflower rice.

Source: Foodland Ontario, Health Canada



WHY DESK JOBS CAN BE DEADLY



**COULD MOVING AROUND MORE AT WORK
PROTECT YOU FROM HEART DISEASE?
POSSIBLY, ACCORDING TO NEW RESEARCH.**

Most Canadians with office jobs spend between 8 and 15 hours a day sitting. That's simply too much. It's enough sitting to put you at increased risk of heart disease, EVEN if you do go to the gym, according to new research.

A recent New York Times article reported that sitting for extended periods of time increases ones risk of injury to the muscles of the heart. Specifically, the study found that people who spend more than 9 hours each day sitting have elevated levels of troponins - the same protein produced during a heart attack. The elevated troponin levels in "chronic sitters" (relative to those who sit less) are lower than those involved in heart attacks; however, the findings are still worrisome to some cardiologists including Dr. Sebag, Cardiologist at the Medisys Preventive Health Clinic in Montreal.

Shockingly, the study also found that total sitting time was more strongly associated with unhealthy troponin levels than exercise was with desirable troponin levels. "The data suggests that while healthy eating and regular exercise remain critically important components of healthy living, what we do 10 hours a day (eg. sitting on our bums) may be more important to pay attention to than what we do during the 30 or so minutes a day we spend at the gym" notes Dr. Sebag.

People who sit for more than 9 hours a day are at significantly increased risk of numerous diseases AND have shorter life expectancies, according to a University Health Network study in Toronto that examined the relationship between sitting and mortality.

Think you don't fall into the "sedentary behaviour" category? Think again. If you work a typical 9-5 office job, sit during your lunch hour, and spend an hour commuting to and from work each day, you are sedentary for a whopping 10 hours per day! Do you also sit for dinner and then watch a few hours of TV when you get home? Now you're at 15 hours/day of sitting time.

People who sit too much are at increased risk of developing insulin resistance and diabetes, fat deposits in and around the heart, heart failure, and other health problems. Importantly, most of these "sitting-related health risks" remain relatively high, EVEN when we exercise a few times a week. The bottom line: regular exercise is important, but being less sedentary all the time is better.

The obvious remedy for sitting too much is to stand and walk more often. Here are some tips:

- Invest in a standing desk (or a walking desk)
- Park your car farther away from wherever you're going, all the time
- Avoid escalators and elevators, take the stairs, always
- Take a longer route to the restroom or mail room at your office
- While sitting in front of a computer, set a timer to remind you to stand up and move every 30 minutes
- Don't sit while talking on the phone, stand or better yet, walk and talk
- Engage in walking meetings
- Don't send emails to nearby recipients, walk over to your colleague and talk to them
- When taking the subway, train, or bus, don't look for a seat - stand
- When watching TV, use commercial breaks as your cue to get up and move around
- Listen to news podcasts while walking around instead of sitting on the couch watching the news



JOIN THE
ONE MONTH
MICRONUTRIENT
CHALLENGE

For one month, receive weekly emails from our team of experts providing relevant information, recommendations and recipes to help you achieve your daily recommended intake of micronutrients.

MORE THAN 80%
OF CANADIANS
HAVE AN INADEQUATE INTAKE OF CALCIUM
AND MAJOR PHYTONUTRIENTS.

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TO LEARN
MORE**

