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Cultivate Optimal Thyroid Health

The thyroid gland is shaped like a butterfly and is found at the front of the neck, below the Adam's apple. Although small in size, this gland has a big influence on the body's ability to transform food into the energy needed to sustain life. Thyroid hormones control the growth, temperature, and function of every cell in the body. It is a vital component of the endocrine system, an elaborate network of hormone-producing glands acting upon the cardiovascular, digestive, neurological, and reproductive systems. The importance of this gland, therefore, cannot be understated.

When functioning properly, the thyroid gland secretes just the right amount of thyroid hormone to regulate almost all the metabolic processes in your body. Too much or too little of these vital body chemicals, and it can drastically influence energy levels, body weight, and your mental health. Cultivating your thyroid health, combined with proper nutrition and diet, can boost energy, improve appetite, reduce insomnia, relieve depression symptoms, improve circulation, relieve muscle aches, and assist you in recovering from endocrine disorders. An easy way to improve thyroid health and the health of your endocrine system, is to eat nutritious meals and maintain a well-balanced diet.

There are two primary ways the thyroid can malfunction: It can be overactive, or hyperthyroid, producing symptoms such as a rapid heartbeat, excessive hunger, weight loss, diarrhea, and heat sensations. Or, conversely, it can underproduce, known as hypothyroid, creating symptoms like a slow heartbeat, reduced appetite, weight gain, constipation, and cold sensations.

If you experience any symptoms, it is important to see your medical doctor in addition to visiting your practitioner of acupuncture and Oriental medicine. Hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism can be diagnosed by testing the levels of thyroid hormones in your blood. Hormones secreted by the thyroid are measured, as well as thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), a chemical released by the pituitary gland that triggers hormone production in the thyroid.

Oriental medicine treatments take all symptoms into account and are aimed at balancing the production and release of thyroid hormones through a variety of approaches, including acupuncture and herbal remedies, lifestyle changes, and special exercises. In the treatment of thyroid problems, acupuncture can be used to restore hormonal balance, regulate energy levels, smooth emotions, and help manage sleep. There are several acupuncture points on the ear and the body that can be used to regulate the production of thyroid hormones.

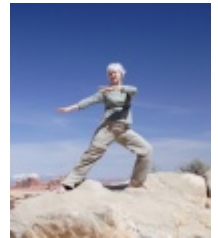
Exercises for Detoxification



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Focus on Lifestyle



Exercise plays an important role in thyroid health.

For the hypothyroid patient, when the body feels sluggish and heavy, it is important to not force oneself to perform rigorous exercise, as it will deplete the body's energy reserves even further.

Although a hyperthyroid patient may exhibit restlessness and appear fidgety, this does not indicate an abundance of healthy physical energy.

The body is overstimulated by the overproduction of thyroid hormones

In order for the endocrine system to function at optimum levels, the process of detoxification must occur. Detoxification removes waste and potentially hazardous material from the body. Waste can be eliminated by different means, including through urine, tears, sweat, and feces. When the body is able to properly detox, the thyroid greatly benefits. Whether you have symptoms relating to thyroid issues, or simply wish to be proactive and help prevent problems, here are a few detoxifying exercises you can perform.

According to the theory of acupuncture and Oriental medicine, the spleen plays a vital role in removing waste products from the body. An efficient spleen will, therefore, help optimize the thyroid's function of producing and releasing hormones. When food and drink are ingested, it is the spleen's duty to separate the clear from the turbid. The clear, which contains valuable nutrients, is sent on to be utilized by other organs. The turbid, useless or possibly harmful matter, descends to the large intestine, where it is prepared for elimination.

To help invigorate your spleen, spending short amounts of time upside-down can help reverse the effects of gravity. If doing a head or hand stand for two to three minutes is not your thing, there are two alternatives: One is to lay face down on the floor, bend your elbows, and rest your chin in your hands so your head is positioned above the trunk of your body. Next, bend your knees and start swinging your feet back and forth. You may remember doing this one when you were a child. This can be done for as long as it is comfortable for you.

The next exercise involves lying on the ground, with your backside down. Raise your legs in the air and rest them against the wall. Relax comfortably into the pose for up to five minutes. You can keep your arms extended to your sides on the floor. If you like, you can raise your arms in the air for 30-40 seconds, and then rest them.

These upside-down exercises can assist in releasing stuck food, gases or other matter that remain trapped somewhere in your digestive system. Removing these obstacles helps improve the blood flow to and from all the organs.

One quick way to help jog your sluggish system is to literally jog in place. Even 30 seconds of doing this will stimulate your system. Or, you could try jumping up and down five times in quick succession.

The best time to perform these exercises is before eating, or waiting at least two hours after a meal.

Foods to Support Thyroid Function

When it comes to lifestyle changes, a diet rich in protein, calcium, magnesium, and iodine helps support thyroid function.

Here are three groups of foods to include in your diet:

Sea Vegetables/Seaweed

Iodine is an essential element that assists the thyroid in producing thyroid hormone. By increasing iodine intake, patients have seen an increase in the production of thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH).

Although it is an essential element, too much iodine, such as an overdose of supplements, can have toxic side effects. The best natural source of iodine is kelp and other sea vegetables.

Brazil Nuts, Sunflower Seeds, and Walnuts

Containing high amounts of selenium, which is essential to efficient thyroid function and protects from goiter, these foods also contain zinc, iron, and copper--all trace metals vital to thyroid function.

Many hypothyroid patients have been found to have deficiencies in trace minerals.

Carrots, Citrus Fruits, Almonds

These are just a few foods high in antioxidants that help the thyroid gland mitigate oxidative stress.

and if left untreated, may eventually lead to hypothyroid as the gland wears itself out.

In both cases, suitable exercises are swimming, walking, gentle yoga, and tai chi.

Tai chi is a form of exercise that strengthens the body through fluid, gentle motions.

The rhythm of tai chi brings tranquility to the mind.

The soothing movements can bring relief to runaway emotions, help increase blood flow to the head, and increase the availability of energy to all of the body.

This practice is affectionately known as 'meditation in motion.' For this reason, tai chi also provides stress relief.

Managing stress levels is very important when it comes to managing symptoms of any thyroid condition.

Maintaining emotional equilibrium prevents the hormone cortisol from being produced. Cortisol is like an alarm bell telling the body to prepare to flee or fight.

Cortisol, when released into the bloodstream in excess, can exacerbate imbalances in the thyroid gland, interrupting the normal rate at which thyroid hormones are produced and released.

Although it is unrealistic to live a life without any stress, it is important to reduce the impact of stressful situations.

A daily routine of tai chi, yoga or a meditation practice may help mitigate the negative consequences of tension and adverse situations when they do occur.

