

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HYPERTHYROIDISM

In the Clinic
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What is hyperthyroidism?

- A disorder that occurs when the thyroid, a butterfly-shaped gland located in the neck, makes excess thyroid hormones.
- Thyroid hormones regulate how your body uses and stores energy.
- Having too much of these hormones can speed up every function of your body (called the "metabolic rate").
- About 1% of the U.S. population has this condition, which is sometimes called "overactive thyroid."
- It affects women, particularly between the ages of 20 and 40, more commonly than men.

What causes hyperthyroidism?

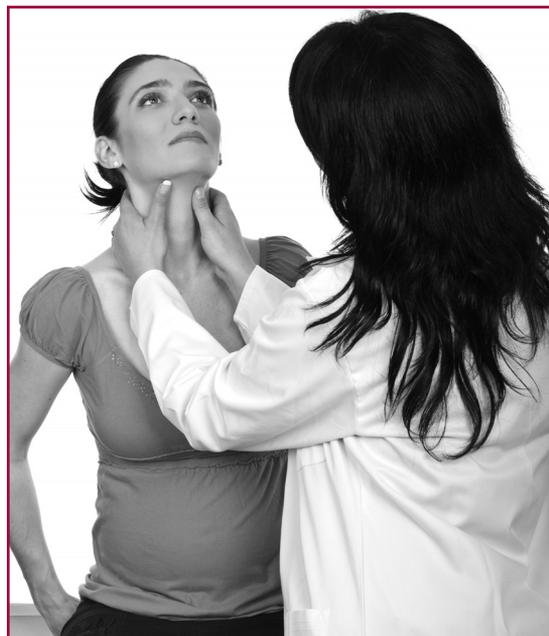
- Graves disease (an autoimmune disease).
- Noncancerous thyroid nodules or lumps.
- Excess iodine consumption.
- Overmedication with synthetic thyroid hormone for underactive thyroid.
- Noncancerous tumor of the pituitary gland (rare).
- Thyroiditis (inflammation of the thyroid gland that causes stored hormones to leak out into the body).

What are common symptoms?

- Feeling too hot, increased sweating.
- Muscle weakness, trembling hands.
- Rapid heartbeat, tiredness, fatigue.
- Weight loss, diarrhea, or frequent bowel movements.
- Painful urination and feeling an urgent need to urinate frequently.
- Menstrual irregularities and infertility.
- Eye irritation or discomfort.

How is it diagnosed?

- Your doctor will perform a careful physical examination and order blood tests to measure your hormone levels.
- Hyperthyroidism is diagnosed when blood tests show that certain hormones levels are abnormal.



- Your doctor may order a radioactive iodine uptake test to identify what is causing your hyperthyroidism.
- A thyroid scan may be ordered to check the shape and size of your thyroid gland, and to see if any nodules are present.

How is it treated?

- Treatment depends on the cause of the hyperthyroidism; your age, physical condition, and preferences; and the severity of the condition.
- Medications may be used to reduce the amount of hormone your thyroid gland makes.
- Beta-blockers can help control your symptoms, including rapid heart rate, tremors, anxiety, and heat intolerance.
- Radiation to destroy the thyroid with radiation, called radioiodine ablation, provides a permanent treatment.
- The thyroid may be removed surgically.

For More Information

www.thyroid.org/patients/patient_brochures/hyperthyroidism.html
www.thyroid.org/patients/faqs/hyperthyroidism.html
Information and answers to frequently asked questions on hyperthyroidism, from the American Thyroid Association.

www.endocrine.niddk.nih.gov/pubs/Hyperthyroidism/
www.endocrine.niddk.nih.gov/pubs/graves/
Information on hyperthyroidism and Graves disease from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

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