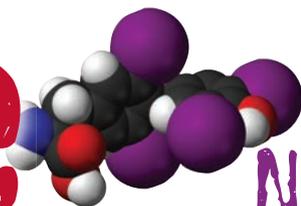


# Iodine



## The Most Misunderstood Nutrient?



Based on an exclusive  
Health Watch Radio  
interview with physician Dr. Michael Schachter

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### What is the function of the thyroid?

The thyroid regulates metabolism of your the entire body, controlling how quickly the body uses energy. With proper functioning, it helps the processes of your body work properly. It controls the generation of heat to keep you warm, produces hormones necessary for brain function, keeps your heart healthy, and regulates the immune system.

### What is hypothyroidism, and what are the signs and symptoms?

Hypothyroidism is one of the most under-diagnosed and important conditions in the United States. A low functioning thyroid has been called the “unsuspected illness” and accounts for a great number of complaints in children, adolescents, and adults.

- Low energy and fatigue or tiredness, especially in the morning, is frequent in these patients.
- Difficulty losing weight, and a sensation of coldness, especially of the hands and feet.
- Depression, slowness of thought processes, headaches.
- Swelling of the face or fluid retention in general.
- Dry, coarse skin, brittle nails, and chronic constipation are also common.
- In women, menstrual problems – such as PMS and menstrual irregularities including heavy periods and fertility problems – are further signs and symptoms.
- People with an underactive thyroid may also have stiffness of joints, muscular cramps, shortness of breath on exertion, and chest pain.

Be aware that a person with a low functioning thyroid doesn't have to have all these symptoms; he or she may have only a few.

### What does iodine have to do with the thyroid?

Iodine is the key ingredient in your thyroid's hormone. T4 or thyroxine, which is the main hormone produced by the thyroid, contains four iodine atoms, and T3, which is the more active thyroid hormone, contains three iodine atoms.

The thyroid is not the only organ in the body that needs iodine. In fact, every cell in the body needs iodine. It is particularly important for organs like the breast, ovary and uterus in women and the prostate in men. It helps keep these organs healthy and prevents cancer. Iodine is also necessary for the immune system. It is antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal and antiparasitic. No microorganism has ever been shown to be resistant to iodine.

### Doesn't table salt have the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) of iodine to prevent problems?

The RDA of iodine is 150 micrograms (NOT MILLIGRAMS) a day, and a little higher for certain special groups like pregnant women. In reality, for many people, this RDA is really too low. The average American intake of iodine at present is less than 100 mcg of iodine a day. So, many of us even take less than the RDA. This is because iodine is not naturally found in foods other than kelp, a type of seaweed. In the 1960's, iodine was added to flour to prevent clumping of the flour and as a nutritional supplement. At that time, the average woman had an iodine intake of about 750 mcg a day, and the incidence of breast cancer was 5 percent. Then, after some studies were misinterpreted as indicating that high doses of iodine are toxic, the government removed the iodine and replaced it with bromine to prevent the clumping. This resulted in a drop in iodine intake to around 100 mcg daily. The breast cancer rate increased to our present 17 percent – a drastic increase which has been shown to be associated with the low iodine intake. Salt became the only source of iodine for most people. These microgram quantities are insufficient for helping to protect us against cancer and many other conditions.

### How can one measure thyroid health to diagnose a hypothyroid?

It has been found that thyroid blood tests are not an accurate way of measuring thyroid health. A patient may have many symptoms of low thyroid and still have normal blood tests. Only a complete diagnostic testing will yield more accurate information for a more accurate diagnosis. Many, if not most, low thyroid patients have normal thyroid hormone tests. So conventional testing is useful only in a very limited number of cases.

In Dr. Schachter's practice they look for three things: low thyroid symptoms, low basal temperatures, and a response to a therapeutic trial of thyroid hormone. They have found that many difficult-to-diagnose complaints are actually undiagnosed hypothyroidism. So if you or someone you know has unexplained symptoms that sound like they may fit this description, you may want to look into hypothyroidism as a cause.

For more than 35 years, Michael B. Schachter, MD, CNS has been the medical director of the Schachter Center for Complementary Medicine, located in Suffern, New York, where he and his staff have treated numerous patients with complementary, alternative, and integrative medical approaches (CAIM). He is a recognized leader in orthomolecular psychiatry, nutritional medicine, chelation therapy for cardiovascular disease, and alternative cancer therapies. He can be reached at [www.schachtercenter.com](http://www.schachtercenter.com)