

Hypothyroidism

There are a number of telling symptoms that portray a possible under-active thyroid, although the results of a traditional blood test may not reveal abnormal levels. These include cold hands and feet, unexplained weight gain, and a tendency to cry easily. In addition, fatigue, loss of motivation, poor physical energy and an inability to complete tasks that would otherwise seem simple may all be markers of this condition.

There are several nutrients required for optimal thyroid function, the most important of which is iodine. With the advent of over-farming many of the root vegetables and produce that would normally yield ample nutrients are depleted, leaving our bodies wanting. Foods that have the richest levels of iodine include kelp and dulse seaweeds, and to a lesser extent, turnip tops, kale and dark spring greens. Blue green algae, spirulina and chlorella all contain iodine, and a cross section of all these foods should be eaten for maximum benefit.

It is important to understand that one particular family of vegetables, known as the brassica family, suppresses thyroid function, so it is important to reduce these from the diet. These include broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts which, whilst healthy in most other circumstances, actually inhibit thyroid function. You can have them in the diet but eat them steamed rather than raw the majority of the time.

As the thyroid gland works on a feed-back loop with the adrenal glands, that regulate our stress mechanisms, it is important to support the adrenals in their function. High stress levels uses extra vitamin C, magnesium, and vitamin B5, which are all found in green leafy vegetables as well as wholegrains and dark red fruits. The thyroid also requires supporting nutrients, including chromium, B6, zinc and selenium, found in seafood, poultry and wholegrains, allowing for a well-rounded diet to support both glands.

Managing stress through the reduction of stimulants such as tea, coffee and alcohol are as important as the intake of nutrient rich foods, as these so-called 'anti-nutrients' rob the body of vitamins and minerals that are essential for its optimal function. The avoidance of refined carbohydrates and snacks such as breads, biscuits and cakes and sugared commercial cereals is vital for the support of both adrenals and thyroid. Relaxation and physical exercise are both important factors in overall stress management in addition to a well-balanced diet.