

Top Foods for Thyroid Health

A doctor recommends these five dietary changes to help optimize your thyroid health.

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Thyroid health

As an endocrinologist, I specialize in the treatment of hormonal issues like diseases of the thyroid.

One of the questions that I'm asked most often: What can I change about my diet to help improve my thyroid health? Luckily, incorporating a few key minerals and elements in your diet may help.

First, let's talk about what the thyroid is and does: The thyroid gland is the only organ in our body that produces thyroid hormone, which is key in maintaining the normal functioning of all our body's organs – from our heart beating to passing bowel movements.

Thyroid hormone levels

Thyroid hormone is made from the [mineral iodine](#). In areas of the world where there is iodine deficiency, thyroid disorders may be more common. Iodine deficiency is more common in the Western Pacific, South-East Asia and Africa.

Luckily, in the U.S., our diet and water supply have enough iodine to help our body create sufficient thyroid hormone. The main times when iodine supplementation is needed is during pregnancy and lactation.

If you're concerned about the [function of your thyroid](#) gland, you can speak to your doctor to check your thyroid hormone levels.

Problems with your thyroid gland

When our thyroid gland isn't functioning well, it can lead to either a [decreased or an increased production of thyroid hormone](#).

Hypothyroidism is a medical condition where the body does not make enough thyroid hormone. Symptoms of hypothyroidism include:

- Worsening fatigue
- Brittle nails
- Dry skin
- [Constipation](#)
- Depression
- Weight gain despite no change in diet or activity

Hyperthyroidism is a medical condition where the body makes too much thyroid hormone. Symptoms of hyperthyroidism include:

- [Heart palpitations](#)

- Diarrhea
- Increased sweating
- [Anxiety](#)
- Difficulty sleeping
- Weight loss despite no change in diet or activity

To my patients with underlying thyroid conditions, I generally recommend incorporating the following foods and nutrients into their diets to help optimize their thyroid health.

Most of my patients with diagnosed thyroid conditions will do well with a combination of the following diet changes, in addition to the use of thyroid medications. It's important to speak with your doctor about finding the best treatment options for you.

Add selenium.

Selenium is involved in the production of selenoproteins, which help in the creation of thyroid hormone.

Brazil nuts, fish – especially yellowfin tuna – oysters, clams, [mushrooms](#), beans and lentils are excellent sources of selenium.

I recommend that my patients with thyroid disease incorporate at least 60 mcg of selenium in their diet daily.

Avoid processed foods with additives and artificial ingredients.

The chemicals in certain [processed foods](#) may lead to increased levels of inflammation that can worsen certain thyroid conditions associated with inflammation – like Hashimoto's thyroiditis, an [autoimmune disease](#) that is the leading cause for hypothyroidism.

These chemicals may include preservatives, artificial food dyes/coloring, artificial flavorings and MSG. Read nutrition labels; its better to avoid consuming that food.

Add omega-3 fatty acids.

[Omega-3 fatty acids](#) have anti-inflammatory properties that may help decrease inflammation in the thyroid gland related to conditions like Hashimoto's thyroiditis, DeQuervain's thyroiditis or other forms of thyroiditis.

Omega-3 fatty acids are found in fatty fish – like mackerel and salmon – cod liver oil, flax seeds, chia seeds and nuts – especially walnuts.

I recommend that my patients with thyroid disease incorporate omega-3 fatty acids in their diet daily, at least 1,100 mg for women and 1,600 mg for men.

Add berries.

[Blueberries](#), strawberries, raspberries, goji berries and acai berries all hold powerful antioxidant effects that can help maintain the normal functioning of the thyroid gland.

I recommend at least 1 cup of [berries](#) (in any combination) daily for all my thyroid patients to help prevent damage to cells and vital organs.

Add zinc.

Zinc is important in the formation and breakdown of thyroid hormone. [Zinc](#) is found in oysters, [fortified cereals](#), beef, turkey, pork and lentils.

I recommend that my patients with thyroid disease, incorporate at least 10 mg of zinc in their diet daily – more if pregnant or breast-feeding.

5 diet changes to improve thyroid health:

- Add selenium.
- Avoid processed foods with additives and artificial ingredients.
- Add omega-3 fatty acids.
- Add berries.
- Add zinc.

Deena Adimoolam, MD, is board certified in internal medicine and endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism. She obtained her medical degree at Mount Sinai in New York and completed her internal medicine residency and endocrinology fellowship training at Yale University. She worked as an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine and served as Associate Program Director for the Endocrinology Fellowship for many years. She is currently practicing at Summit Health in New Jersey.

Dr. Adimoolam uses her specialized skill set in endocrinology to focus on her interests of disease prevention, food as medicine, obesity, weight loss, metabolism and diabetes. She serves on national advisory committees for the Endocrine Society and the American Diabetes Association. She is an advocate for disease prevention through food and lifestyle changes, and helps patients live a healthier lifestyle by sharing her "SHD" (Simple, Healthy, Delicious) recipes to empower the public to make healthier decisions with food and demonstrate that healthy eating does not need to be expensive or complicated. Her recipes can be found on Instagram [@Doctor Deena](#).