

Diet and lifestyle tips for thyroid support

The following are general diet and lifestyle guidelines that may help support thyroid function.

1. Follow a diet of whole, minimally-processed foods

Beyond a whole-foods diet, an [autoimmune protocol diet](#) may also be helpful, particularly in cases of autoimmune dysfunction such as Hashimoto's thyroiditis. Considering many individuals with celiac disease also present with thyroid dysfunction, a [gluten-free](#) diet may help improve symptoms in these cases.

2. Consume adequate amounts of thyroid-supportive nutrients

The following table provides a list of thyroid-supportive nutrients and examples of common dietary sources. Speak to your integrative healthcare provider about supplementation to prevent or address deficiencies.

Nutrient	Effects	Dietary sources
Copper	Required for the synthesis of thyroid hormones; Deficiency may result in hypothyroidism	Beef liver, oysters, sesame seeds, baking chocolate (unsweetened)
Iron	Deficiency may impair thyroid metabolism, contribute to goiter, and lead to hypothyroidism	Fortified cereals, oysters, white beans, dark chocolate, lentils, spinach
Iodine*	Required for the synthesis of thyroid hormones	Seaweed, seafood (e.g., cod, shrimp, tuna), dairy (e.g., yogurt, milk), eggs
Selenium	Required for the synthesis of thyroid hormones; Deficiency may be involved in the development of autoimmune thyroiditis	Brazil nuts, seafood (e.g., tuna, halibut, sardines, shrimp), meat (e.g., beef, chicken, turkey), cottage cheese, rice
Vitamin A	Deficiency may increase the risk of goiter	Sweet potato, beef liver, spinach, carrots, cantaloupe, red peppers, mango
Vitamin B12	Deficiency may be involved in the development of hypothyroidism and autoimmune thyroiditis	Beef and beef liver, seafood (e.g., clams, trout, salmon, tuna) fortified nutritional yeast and cereals, dairy (e.g., milk, yogurt)
Vitamin C	Deficiency may affect selenium metabolism and action; Deficiency has been observed in hyperthyroidism	Peppers, oranges, grapefruit, kiwi, broccoli, strawberries, Brussels sprouts, cantaloupe, cabbage, cauliflower
Vitamin D	Deficiency may be associated with autoimmune thyroid disease	Cod liver oil, seafood (e.g., swordfish, salmon, tuna, sardines), fortified orange juice, dairy (e.g., milk, yogurt), beef liver, eggs (yolk)
Zinc	Required for the synthesis of thyroid hormones and T3 receptor function; Deficiency may increase risk of hypothyroidism	Oysters, beef, fortified cereals, lobster, pork, chicken, pumpkin seeds, dairy (e.g., milk, yogurt, cheese), cashews, chickpeas, oatmeal

*Caution: Excess iodine may also result in decreased thyroid hormones.

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3. Avoid or reduce consumption of dietary factors that negatively affect thyroid function

The following table provides examples of these dietary factors and the dietary sources in which they may be found.

Dietary factor	Effects	Dietary sources
C-glycosyl flavones	Goitrogenic; May have an anti-thyroid effect	Millet
Cyanogenic glycosides	Goitrogenic; May promote iodine deficiency and hypothyroidism	Cassava, sorghum, maize, millet
Gluten	Associated with autoimmune thyroid disease	Wheat, rye, barley, spelt, and non-gluten-free oats; may be hidden in processed foods as natural flavorings
Iodine (in excess)	May increase thyroid antibodies and contribute to thyroiditis and hypothyroidism	Seaweed, seafood (e.g., cod, shrimp, tuna), dairy (e.g., yogurt, milk), eggs, iodized salt, food additives (e.g., iodine in flours or bread, preservatives)
Isothiocyanates	Goitrogenic; Interfere with iodine uptake and enzyme activity (TPO) in the thyroid gland	Brassica (Cruciferae): cabbage, broccoli, kale, cauliflower, kohlrabi, turnips, rutabaga, mustard, horseradish
Isoflavones (e.g., genistein, daidzein)	Goitrogenic; Inhibits thyroid enzyme (TPO) activity	Soy protein, peas, beans
Some flavonoids (e.g., quercetin, catechin, rutin)	Inhibits thyroid enzyme (TPO, Type I deiodinase) activity	Fruits, vegetables, green tea

4. Engage in regular physical activity

Regular physical activity has been shown to improve thyroid hormone levels (e.g., TSH, T4, and T3). Physical activity needs may vary based on age and other factors. Refer to our [physical activity guidelines](#) handout and consult your integrative healthcare provider for more information.

5. Reduce stress

Increased cortisol levels as a result of stress have been shown to negatively affect thyroid hormone levels. Learn to recognize signs of stress in your body, such as low energy, changes in mood, and difficulty sleeping. Incorporate stress-reduction techniques, such as:

- Mindfulness practices (e.g., meditation, yoga, tai chi)
- Regular moderate exercise (e.g., 30 minutes of walking)
- Realistic goal-setting to reduce overwhelm
- Social support from family, friends, colleagues, and community or religious associations

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