



Wellness-Fitness Newsletter

Winter 2011

THYROID AWARENESS MONTH

The thyroid gland is a bowtie-shaped organ at the base of our throats. Although fairly small, it controls a great many vital functions, including heart rate, digestion, metabolism, and even how much you sweat. If your thyroid isn't working properly, chances are neither are you!

The thyroid gland works by absorbing iodine from foods we eat and converting it into the thyroid hormones thyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3). Every cell in the body depends upon T3 and T4 for regulation of the body's metabolism.

Hyperthyroidism vs. Hypothyroidism

If your thyroid is overactive (hyperthyroidism), you may feel anxious, lose weight, have a rapid heart rate, or have trouble sleeping. Too little thyroid activity (hypothyroidism) might make you feel fatigued or sluggish, develop dry skin and hair, experience muscle cramps, and gain weight.

Your physician can diagnose a thyroid malfunction with a physical exam and a simple blood test for thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH). Your doctor can also prescribe a treatment plan if necessary.

Symptoms

Over 27 million Americans have overactive or underactive thyroid glands. Unfortunately, over half of all cases of thyroid disorder remain undiagnosed. This is because many of the symptoms, although serious, are often so subtle that they're easily missed. Symptoms can vary from person to person. Some common symptoms are:

Hyperthyroidism

- nervousness or irritability
- fatigue or muscle weakness
- trouble sleeping
- heat intolerance
- hand tremors
- rapid and irregular heartbeat
- frequent bowel movements or diarrhea
- weight loss
- mood swings
- goiter, which is an enlarged thyroid that may cause your neck to look swollen

Hypothyroidism

- fatigue
- weight gain
- puffy face and around eyes
- cold intolerance
- joint and muscle pain
- dry, thinning hair
- decreased sweating
- slowed heart rate
- depression



Thyroid Disorder Facts

- More than 80 percent of patients with thyroid disease are women.
- Between 15 to 20 percent of people with diabetes and their siblings or parents are likely to develop thyroid disease (compared to 4.5 percent of the general population).
- The incidence of hypothyroidism increases with age. By age 60, as many as 17 percent of women and 9 percent of men have an underactive thyroid.
- Thyroid disorders tend to run in the family.
- Being left-handed, ambidextrous, or prematurely grey mean greater risk of autoimmune disease, including thyroid problems.

Additional Resources

- Learn how to give yourself a neck check to look for signs of thyroid enlargement.
<http://www.thyroid.org>.
- National Institutes of Health (NIH)
<http://endocrine.niddk.nih.gov/info/index.htm>



STRONG LEGS MEAN STABLE KNEES

The knee is a complex hinge joint formed at the union of three bones: the femur (thigh bone), the tibia (shin bone), and the patella (knee cap). When the leg is fully extended, the knee joint is locked and no rotation is possible. However, when the knee is bent, the lower leg is free to rotate in or out – and that is when your knees are most vulnerable to injury.

If you ski, play basketball or volleyball, you are most likely to injure your anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), which is one of the four ligaments that stabilize the knee. The ACL's job is to limit the rotation and the forward movement of the tibia. However, movements like stopping quickly, jumping, or pivoting, often lead to ACL tears because of the anatomical instability of the knee joint. In fact, more than 100,000 Americans tear their ACL each year.

Injury Prevention

Many ACL injuries can be prevented by keeping the muscles surrounding the knees strong and flexible so they can help stabilize all the ligaments that support the knees. To reduce the risk of a knee injury:

- Train and condition year-round.
- When you pivot, crouch and bend at the knees and hips. This reduces stress on the ACL.
- Focus on strengthening your hamstring and quadriceps muscles, which work together to bend or straighten the leg.

Recognizing an ACL injury

If you injure your ACL, you may not feel any pain immediately. You might hear a popping noise and feel your knee give out from under you, but within a few hours, you'll notice swelling at the knee. The knee will hurt when you try to stand on it. It's important to keep weight off the knee until you can see your health care provider, or you may

injure the knee cartilage. You should use an ice pack to reduce swelling and keep the leg elevated. If needed, use a pain reliever. If you must walk, use crutches.

Strong and Stable Knees

Conditioning exercises should include controlled drills that require you to keep your body balanced over your lower legs with your hips and knees flexed. The American Council on Exercise also recommends that you perform exercises that link strength with speed, such as

plyometric exercises. Plyometrics (the repeated, rapid stretching and contracting of muscles to increase muscle power) improve muscle tolerance for increased stretch loads and include movements such as in-place bouncing, single leg squats, short jumps, and stabilization jumps.

The health professionals at your FOH Wellness/Fitness Center can provide more tips about knee exercises as well as information about plyometrics.

Perform leg curls to strengthen the hamstrings, and leg extensions to strengthen the quadriceps. Strengthening both muscle groups can better protect against knee injuries, but be sure to use proper form when performing any exercises involving the knee joint.



Leg Curls

Sit up or lie face down on a leg curl machine. The ankle pads should be resting on the back of your legs, at the base of the calf. The angle at your knee should be approximately 180 degrees at the start of the exercise. Contract the hamstrings to bend your knees until the ankle pad comes as close as possible to touching the buttocks. Slowly return your feet to the starting position. Do not lift your hips at any time throughout the movement.



Leg Extensions

Sit in a leg extension machine with your knees bent at 90 degrees and your legs tucked behind the ankle pad. Extend the legs at the knee to 180 degrees, or until parallel to the floor. This movement will fully contract the quadriceps. Lower the feet until you reach a 90-degree angle at the knee. Do not bend the knees to more than 90 degrees, as it will increase the strain on your knees.



NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Each January, fitness centers pack in new members who are intent on fulfilling their New Year's health goals. But within a few months, attendance drops sharply as motivation fades. Despite high enthusiasm, only about 40 percent of "New Year's Resolvers" are actually on track after six months.

What causes motivation to fade? And what can you do to keep your enthusiasm high? The answer lies in well-defined goals and personal readiness.

Ready... Set... Goals You Can Live With

It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of making promises, and end up setting overly optimistic goals that are insurmountable. One example of such a goal would be: "I resolve to lose 30 lbs by April!" So how can you insure that you've set reasonable goals that you can stick to? The key is to break large goals into smaller ones and reframe goals to make them achievable in the short term. Here are a few tips:

- Tie short-term goals to a behavior, not a weight loss or fitness outcome. A sample of such a goal is, "I will work out at least three times a week."
- Target the "right" behavior. You can't work out if you never make it there. If "getting there" is your particular challenge, revise your goal to: "I will make it inside the gym" or "go outside to walk."
- Plan incremental milestones. For fitness goals, consider duration, intensity, and frequency. This way you can keep motivation high over time. For example, when focusing on duration, plan to work out 5-10% longer each week (work up to a 60 minute workout) until the desired level is reached.

- Aim for daily and weekly successes. Reward yourself for each day you make it.

Are You Ready?

Just because we arbitrarily choose January 1st as our starting point, it doesn't mean that's when you'll be ready for drastic change. Change often happens gradually, and people usually pass through four stages of "change readiness" on their way to making lasting change:



- 1) "Thinking about it." You accept that the change (exercising, stopping tobacco use, etc.) is generally good, but you are still vague on how it applies to you. To help yourself move forward, gather information on the benefits of the change you're considering.



- 2) "Ready for change." You want to make a change and may be ready to take small steps to test your ability to fully commit. This is a good time to make a commitment. Remember to reach out to friends and family for their support.



- 3) "Ready for action." Your plan is in motion and you are taking action. Monitor your progress and celebrate your successes.



- 4) "I made it." Reward yourself for maintaining the changes. Forgive yourself for setbacks. If you have to start at step #3 again, consider lessons learned, and forge ahead.

Knowing your personal level of change readiness will help you set goals that are "right" at your stage of readiness. If you are in stage #1, a realistic goal should be to gather information to help you make a decision about the change.

As with any change in physical activity, consult a physician before you begin. Also, don't forget to check with the health professionals at your FOH Wellness/ Fitness Center for tips and information.



SIX FOODS TO EAT EVERY DAY

Resolve to eat more of these underappreciated fruits and vegetables in 2011.

Beets

These naturally sweet vegetables are an excellent source of folate and are loaded with vitamins A, B1, B2, B6, and C. Beet greens are a better source of iron than spinach.

Serving tip: Wash and peel beets, then shred on the widest setting using a grater. Toss with one tablespoon of olive oil and the juice of half a lemon. Beet greens can be boiled like spinach or eaten fresh in a salad.

Potatoes

This root veggie is a good source of potassium. Eaten with the skin intact, potatoes offer almost half a day's worth of Vitamin C. Select sweet potatoes or yams, and you'll also get a beta carotene boost.

Serving tip: Tiny "finger" varieties are now widely available. Boil or roast them for about 15 minutes, then keep them in the fridge to have on hand for quick side dishes or portable high-energy snacks.

Wild Rice

This high protein, high fiber, gluten-free grain is a great source of potassium and is loaded with B vitamins. Because of its thick bran layer, wild rice requires up to 60 minutes cooking time.

Serving tip: Blend with equal parts brown rice and stir in your favorite veggies for a nutty side dish or cold rice salad.

Cabbage

With only 22-calories per cup, cabbage is high in vitamins B6, K, and C, and is a good source of folate.

Serving tip: Instead of lettuce, try some cabbage leaves on burgers.

Legumes

Legumes include beans of all kinds, including navy, pinto, kidney, white, red, black, black-eyed peas, and garbanzo. Legumes provide iron, fiber, good quality protein, and many other nutrients.

Serving tip: For the highest nutritional impact, combine beans with grains for a dish that provides all nine essential amino acids.

Purslane

With crispy stems and leaves that have a mild lemony flavor, this leaf vegetable has the most heart-healthy omega-3 fats of any edible plant.

Serving tip: Top purslane with grilled chicken or salmon and sprinkle with lemon vinaigrette.

As a general rule, to eat more healthfully, try to avoid foods that contain added sugars. Instead, opt for fresh meats, eggs, vegetables, low-fat dairy, nuts, in-season fruits, and grain products that are made from 100 percent whole grains.



New Orleans Red Beans and Rice

Try this virtually fat free vegetarian dish to include some legumes in your menu.

1 lb. dry red beans	3 Tbsp chopped garlic
2 qt. water	3 Tbsp chopped parsley
1 1/2 C chopped onion	2 tsp crushed dried thyme
1 C chopped green pepper	1 tsp salt
1 C chopped celery	1 tsp black pepper
4 bay leaves	

- 1) Rinse beans thoroughly.
- 2) In large pot, combine beans, water, onion, celery, and bay leaves. Bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover, and cook on low for 1 1/2 hours or until beans are tender. Stir.
- 3) Add green pepper, garlic, parsley, thyme, salt, and black pepper. Cook uncovered on low about 30 minutes. Remove bay leaves.
- 4) Serve with hot cooked brown rice.

Find a PDF with this recipe, including nutritional information, and other healthy recipes at www.nutrition.gov.

Wellness within your reach.

800.457.9808

www.FOH.hhs.gov

