

# THE PROACTIVE

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Living Well with Hypothyroidism

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## Living Well with Hypothyroidism

### 5 Ways to Manage Symptoms

Your thyroid is a small, butterfly-shaped gland situated at the base of the front of your neck, just below your Adam's apple. Hormones produced by the thyroid gland – triiodothyronine (T3) and thyroxine (T4) – have an enormous impact on your health, affecting all aspects of your metabolism. These hormones also influence the control of vital functions, such as body temperature and heart rate.

#### MEDICATION ADHERENCE

Levothyroxine (T4) is the usual treatment for hypothyroidism; it is effective for treating symptoms in most patients, and is inexpensive, well-tolerated, and can be taken just once daily.

Levothyroxine is best taken on an empty stomach at the same time every day. Ideally, the hormone should be taken in the morning—at least an hour before eating, drinking hot beverages, or taking other medications. If taken at bedtime, wait four hours after a meal or snack.

To avoid potential interactions, do not eat these foods or use these products within several hours before or after taking thyroid medication:

- Walnuts
- Soy
- Iron supplements or multivitamins containing iron
- Calcium supplements
- Antacids that contain aluminum or magnesium
- Some ulcer medications, such as sucralfate (Carafate)
- Some cholesterol-lowering drugs, such as those containing cholestyramine (Prevalite) and colestipol (Colestid)

Hypothyroidism results when the thyroid gland fails to produce enough hormones. Hypothyroidism may be due to a number of factors including: autoimmune disease, hyperthyroidism treatments, radiation therapy, thyroid surgery, and certain medications.

Over time, untreated hypothyroidism can cause a number of health problems, such as obesity, joint pain, infertility, and heart disease.

Signs and symptoms may include:

- Fatigue
- Constipation
- Dry skin
- Weight gain
- Muscle weakness
- Pain, stiffness or swelling in your joints
- Thinning hair
- Enlarged thyroid gland (goiter)

**Medication is essential for treating hypothyroidism, but making certain lifestyle changes can help you better manage your symptoms.** Here are 5 tips to feeling well:

#### 1 Fill Up with Healthy Foods

Start by examining your daily diet to see whether any changes or swaps can be made. Meals should focus around veggies, fruits, lean protein, and healthy fats, while avoiding highly processed foods. Weight gain is a common symptom of hypothyroidism, so eating well can also help you maintain a healthy weight.

#### 2 Exercise Regularly, Mix It Up

Exercise can boost energy, decrease stress, and help maintain a healthy weight. Work in the 3 types of exercises: aerobic (cardio), strengthening, and flexibility. Exercises to try: Walking, light weight lifting, and yoga.

#### 3 Go To Bed Early

It is common to feel tired throughout the day with hypothyroidism. Establishing a sleep schedule and sticking to it can help. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day—including weekends.

#### 4 Be Careful with Supplements

Use caution when considering supplements that claim to boost thyroid function. These supplements have not been proven effective and may contain unregulated amounts of thyroid hormones.

Other supplements may affect the body's ability to absorb medication. Talk to your doctor before taking iron supplements or multivitamins that contain iron, aluminum hydroxide (antacids), and calcium supplements.

#### 5 Listen to Your Body

Hypothyroidism is different for everyone, and everyone responds differently to treatment. Be sure to schedule follow-up visits as often as your doctor recommends.