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Hypothyroidism: Dieting can damage your thyroid



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HYPOTHYROIDISM WEIGHT LOSS TIPS

Despite your best dieting and exercise efforts, you're not losing weight and finding it even harder to keep weight off. Worse, you're exhausted and can't seem to pull yourself out of the dumps. There's a good chance you've got hypothyroidism and your weight loss efforts are the root cause. We talked with Dr. Elizabeth Lyster from the Holtorf Medical Group in Foster City, California, about the impact of dieting on the thyroid.



TYPES OF HYPOTHYROIDISM

[Dr. Lyster](#), who specializes in weight management associated with thyroid conditions, says that an underactive thyroid can be related to the thyroid's inability to function properly, hormonal imbalances, and stress.

Primary hypothyroidism

According to Dr. Lyster, primary hypothyroidism is when the thyroid gland itself is not functioning well, either due to one's own antibodies attacking it (autoimmune or Hashimoto's thyroiditis), lack of iodine (a mineral needed to make thyroid hormones) or other problems with the thyroid gland.

Secondary hypothyroidism

Another type of hypothyroidism is related to the pituitary gland. "Secondary hypothyroidism is when the thyroid gland is not being adequately stimulated by brain-releasing hormones from the pituitary gland," says the medical specialist.

Stress-related hypothyroidism

Who knew stress to the body could cause hypothyroidism? Dr. Lyster says stress caused by disease and even calorie restriction, as in dieting, can cause an upset in the levels of thyroid hormones. She explains that when the inactive form of thyroid hormone (thyroxine or T4) is not converting to the active form of the hormone (triiodothyronine or T3), and instead converts to reverse T3, it blocks the T3 receptors as well as blocking the proper T4 to T3 conversion, causing hypothyroidism.

What you need to know about hypothyroidism >>

THYROID CONDITIONS ARE OFTEN MISDIAGNOSED

Whenever you have changes in your health, you should see a doctor, and get a second opinion if your doctor's diagnosis and course of treatment doesn't seem to help your condition. Hypothyroidism ranks high on the list of commonly misdiagnosed health issues for women, making it important for you to rule it out or get a proper diagnosis when your health goes awry.

"Thyroid dysfunction is mistaken for all sorts of conditions in women, the most common of which include depression and other mental disorders, metabolic syndrome when they can't lose weight, and fatigue," explains Dr. Lyster.

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DON'T LET YOUR DIETING DAMAGE YOUR THYROID

Though you may need to lose a few (or many) pounds, keep in mind that restrictive dieting or dropping entire food groups from your diet can actually hinder your weight loss efforts by impairing your thyroid function.

"Prolonged calorie restriction should be avoided," says Dr. Lyster. "And the best type of exercise program is one that is enjoyable, not excessive, and can be sustainable for the long run." The doctor adds that, in general, any kind of stress to the body should be managed as well as possible before it affects thyroid function.