

Diet and Lifestyle Changes for Good Thyroid Health

The following recommendations are helpful for improving your thyroid function. Use these diet and lifestyle approaches to keep your thyroid as healthy as possible.

1. Start with a 30-Day Paleo Reset

- Eliminate vegetable oils, gluten, grains, sugar, and processed foods
- Emphasize whole foods like meat, vegetables, fruit, nuts, and seeds
- Do not restrict calorie intake — eat to satisfaction
- If you have an autoimmune thyroid condition, do not reintroduce gluten

2. Include a variety of carbohydrate sources to match activity levels

- Very-low-carb diets can reduce thyroid function
- Aim for at least 30 percent of calories from starchy plants, fruits, and gluten-free grains if tolerated
- Increase carbohydrate intake if very active

3. Include selenium- and iodine-rich foods

- Selenium-rich foods include: Brazil nuts, fish, shellfish, beef/lamb kidney, red meat, mushrooms, poultry
- Iodine-rich foods include: seaweed, fish, poultry, dairy, cranberry, potato

4. Eat one pound of fatty fish per week

- Omega-3 fats in fatty fish are anti-inflammatory
- Inflammation can impact thyroid function and worsen autoimmunity
- Fatty fish include: salmon, sardines, tuna, trout, mackerel, herring, whitefish, sturgeon

5. Exercise appropriately

- Both too little and too much exercise can impact thyroid function
- Aim for a mix of cardio and resistance exercises (e.g., walking/jogging and weight lifting) three to five days per week
- Avoid over-exercising, which stresses the thyroid

6. Reduce stress

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- Stress can worsen or even cause hypothyroid symptoms and autoimmunity
- Stress management is a non-negotiable part of healing from thyroid conditions
- Commit to regular (even daily) stress management practices such as meditation, deep breathing, yoga, journaling, etc.

7. Minimize goitrogens

- Excess intake of goitrogenic foods can contribute to thyroid conditions
- Foods high in goitrogens include yuca/cassava, soy, millet, sweet potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, bok choy, kale, collard greens
- Cooking these foods and consuming more iodine-rich foods can help combat this effect. Limit your intake of raw goitrogenic foods to three to four servings a week (i.e., no green smoothie with raw kale every day). Cooked goitrogenic foods may be consumed daily provided your iodine intake is adequate.

8. Include fermented foods

- Good gut health is strongly connected to thyroid health
- The gut microbiome needs probiotics and prebiotics to thrive
- Fermented foods contain live organisms as well as prebiotic fibers to help promote gut health