

THYROID HEALTH FOR SENIORS

HEALTH CARE AWARENESS



Thyroid Awareness Month

Helpful Information About Thyroid Health for Seniors

January is thyroid awareness month. It is important for seniors to understand thyroid health as many live with undiagnosed thyroid problems.

Thyroid diseases often go undiagnosed in the elderly, complicating and exacerbating other health issues.

January is thyroid awareness month. It's an important time for seniors and their caregivers to understand thyroid health. Knowing basic information about the thyroid can help protect seniors against the effects and risks of thyroid disease.



The Basics: Understanding Thyroid Health

What is the Thyroid?

An endocrine gland at the base of the neck, the thyroid is small but powerful. A thyroid affects many essential body functions, contributing to tasks like regulating body temperature and metabolism. Digestion, cognitive ability, and other functions are also affected by the thyroid.

What Kinds of Thyroid Diseases Are There?

The most well-known thyroid condition is hypothyroidism, which means the gland does not produce enough thyroid hormones. Another condition is hyperthyroidism, which causes too much hormone production. Other conditions include cancer, Grave's disease, goiter, and Hashimoto's disease.

How are Thyroid Problems Diagnosed?

A combination of simple tests can be used to diagnose thyroid problems. A doctor can measure reflexes, metabolic rates, and perform a clinical evaluation to check for a thyroid issue. These tests are typically performed along with blood tests that check T4, T3, TSH, antibodies, or other blood levels.

How are Thyroid Conditions Treated?

Treatment for thyroid dysfunction is specific to each disease and patient. Typically doctors prescribe medications to either decrease thyroid production or to replace the function of the thyroid. Treatments with iodine or therapy may be used in some situations. Surgery for the thyroid is rarely performed on older patients.

([National Academy of Hypothyroidism](#), [Thyroid.com](#))

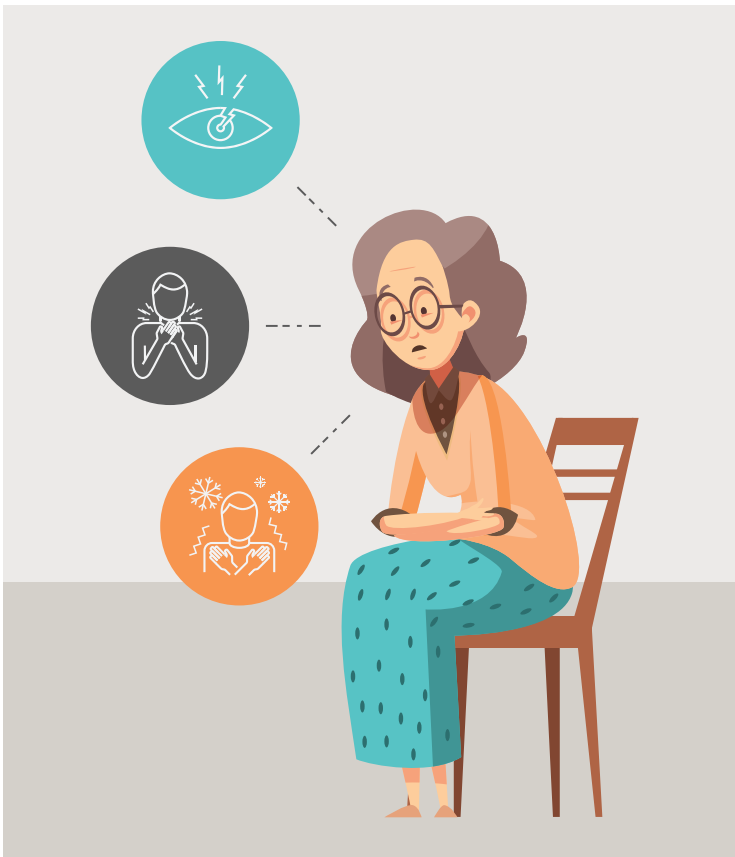
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Recognizing Symptoms of Thyroid Issues

There are over 300 symptoms of thyroid problems, many of which are common to other diseases as well. Younger patients often exhibit many symptoms, whereas seniors often experience only a few. Seniors with thyroid problems often go undiagnosed because so many symptoms of thyroid dysfunction are common to other age-related health issues.



The most commonly occurring symptoms of thyroid dysfunction include:

- Cold extremities
- Dry skin
- Unexplained weight gain or loss
- Digestive issues
- Vision problems
- Difficulty swallowing
- Fatigue or tiredness

Seniors are at greater risk of having thyroid problems if:

- A family member has thyroid disease
- A family member has an autoimmune disorder
- Swelling occurs around the thyroid
- Nodules are found on the thyroid
- They are a female over age 50

Since so many seniors are at risk of developing a thyroid condition and the symptoms are so diverse, it is recommended that seniors ask their healthcare provider for thyroid monitoring during regular appointments.

(Comfort Keepers)

? Did You Know?

Symptoms of thyroid disorders are similar to common signs of aging. As a result, many seniors suffering from thyroid disease live undiagnosed.



Home Care Tip:

If you suspect a senior may have some type of thyroid dysfunction, encourage them to see their doctor. Since symptoms are commonly confused with normal aging, seniors may be reluctant to seek help. However, besides the basic bloodwork, evaluating this disease is painless. Preventing the risks of thyroid disease is worth the simple testing.