

You & Your Thyroid
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When a person thinks of going to the doctor for a check-up, there are probably lots of things that come to mind. I need to have my heart checked, my blood pressure checked, my weight checked and/or my blood sugar checked. But the thyroid is something that rarely comes to mind for most Americans.

Kelly R. Hale, President of the American Foundation of Thyroid Patients stated, "One in ten Americans has thyroid disease. Half of these, or 9.6 million persons, remain undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. A simple blood test will tell." "Low-cost thyroid disease screenings can be obtained nationwide by calling 1-800-929-2044, say you were referred by the American Foundation of Thyroid Patients."

Persons can have hyperthyroidism (an overactive thyroid) or hypothyroidism (an underactive thyroid).

The following are the symptoms that persons may exhibit if they have hyperthyroidism: Nervousness, irritability, increased perspiration, thinning of the skin, fine brittle hair, muscle weakness (especially in the upper arms and thighs), increased frequency of bowel movements, weight loss with no decline in appetite, lightened menstrual flow, less frequent menstrual periods, hands may shake, eyes may bulge, difficulty sleeping, heat intolerance, infertility, warm/moist palms and softening of the nails.

A diffuse toxic goiter is the cause of hyperthyroidism in 70 – 80% of patients. This type of hyperthyroidism runs in families, for the most part.

The following are the symptoms that persons may exhibit if they have hypothyroidism, which is the most common of the two thyroid problems:

Depression, fatigue, loss of interest in normal daily activities, dry/brittle hair, dry and itchy skin, constipation, muscle cramps, increased menstrual flow in women, loss of eyebrow hair, puffy face, slow heartbeat, cold intolerance, forgetfulness, infertility and weight gain without an increased appetite.

The most common type of thyroid gland failure, Hashimoto's acute thyroiditis, is also found to run in families.

Just because you have one or more of the above symptoms, it doesn't necessarily mean you have hyper/hypothyroidism. But, it would be a good idea to report these symptoms to your family physician, so that they can evaluate you for hyper/hypothyroidism, if they feel it is warranted. Your family physician will be able to give you a check-up and determine if your symptoms are related to another problem.

There are 2 websites that were used when researching this article, the first was The American

Foundation of Thyroid Patients at www.thyroidfoundation.org and the second was The American Thyroid Association at www.thyroid.org.