

Dear Bethel...



IODINE



& Thyroid Health

Dear Bethel,

I've read and heard lots of conflicting information on iodine and thyroid health. What are the safe limits, and what are the results of getting too much or too little?

Thanks,

—Laura

Dear Laura,

Iodine is a “Goldilocks” nutrient. Having too little or too much can cause or exacerbate issues like goiter, hypothyroidism, or Hashimoto’s. Ideally, our intake should be between 50 and 200 micrograms per day. Consuming more than that can actually slow thyroid function. In fact, after the introduction of iodized salt, the number of goiters dropped, but the rates of Hashimoto’s skyrocketed!

There is strong evidence suggesting that those who have been diagnosed with hypothyroidism or Hashimoto’s often benefit from a low iodine diet and lifestyle. In one study, 70% of the participants improved or reversed their hypothyroidism simply by implementing a low-iodine diet!

Iodine can show up in some unusual places, ranging from commercially prepared breads to personal care products, so figuring out how much you’re consuming can be tricky. Below is a list of (often hidden) high-iodine foods, ingredients, and products to avoid if you are dealing with thyroid disease.

IODIZED SALT. If you consume the RDA of table salt, you’ll get roughly 300–400 mcg. of iodine/day, which is well over the safe 200 mcg. limit!

SEAWEED & SEAFOOD. My advice is to avoid seaweeds including carrageenan, agar-agar, nori, kombu, etc. Carrageenan is often found as a thickener in dairy products like sour cream, as well as in many non-dairy milk substitutes like soy and almond milk.

In seafood, the highest iodine concentrations are found in sardines, cod, had-dock, mullet, squid, lobster,

and oysters. Low iodine fish and shellfish include halibut, shrimp, and scallops.

DAIRY & EGGS. Milk, yogurt, and most cheeses have high or variable iodine content. Milk can range from 88–168 mcg. per cup! Eggs average 40–50 mcg. of iodine. Yolks tend to contain about 5x as much iodine as egg whites.

BAKED GOODS. Commercially-baked products like bread, bagels, and crackers often contain iodine-based, dough conditioners. (This goes for gluten-free options, too.) A slice of bread can range anywhere from 2.2 to 587 mcg! To

be safe, avoid commercial baked goods.

POTATOES. These have about 60 mcg. of iodine, and most of it is in the skin. It may be best to use potatoes in small quantities, only eat the inner flesh, or remove them for a time if you suspect you are sensitive to them.

RED DYE #3. This is an iodine-based coloring. It’s best to read labels and avoid red, red-orange, orange, and brown processed foods and pills. Many medications contain red dye #3, so be sure to check with your doctor or pharmacist to determine if any of your medications contain this ingredient.

VITAMINS & SUPPLEMENTS. Many multi-vitamins and thyroid supplements contain high amounts of iodine and are best avoided. Look for vitamins and supplements that are iodine free.

PVP. Polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVP) is an iodine-based ingredient commonly used in cosmetics as a binder, stabilizer, and fixative. It is primarily seen in mascara,

