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.

Thyroid Gland

In seafood, the highest iodine concentrations are found in sardines, cod, haddock, 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 multivitamins 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,
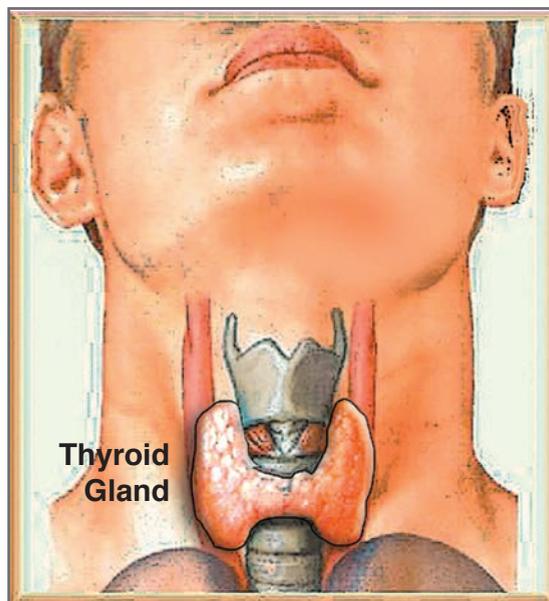
eyeliner, shampoos and condition-ers, hair sprays, face creams, and lotions. Also avoid iodine-based antiseptics or disinfectants like Betadine (povidone iodine).

LET'S DO THE MATH

The typical American diet is too heavy on iodine. On an average day, a person might get:

1 tsp. iodized salt = 200+ mcg

1 C. milk = 88 mcg.

1 egg = 50 mcg.

2 slices bread = 300 mcg.

Multivitamin = 150 mcg.

The grand total? 788 mcg. of iodine, and most of that could easily be before lunchtime!

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Give your thyroid the "Goldilocks" treatment by keeping your iodine intake within the opti-mal range. Here are some tips:

- Switch to a non-iodized salt that is low in iodine like gray Celtic sea salt.
- Focus on clean protein, and stick to low iodine seafood options like halibut, shrimp and scallops.

- Eat lots of leafy greens, colorful veggies, and low glycemic load fruits.
- Try removing dairy and eggs.
- Cut out commercial baked goods and packaged foods in order to avoid iodine-based dough conditioners and colorings.
- Check all prescriptions, supplements, and personal-care products for iodine content and iodine-based ingredients. ■

BETHEL WAGNER received her training from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, studying a variety of dietary theories and practical-lifestyle-coaching methods. She helps exhausted moms with hypothyroidism increase their energy, boost their mood and release weight, so they can zoom through their days with energy to spare. Bethel is currently offering her **Thriving Thyroid Course,** as well as a **28-Day Thyroid, Metabolism & Energy Jumpstart.** Call **(406) 479-3242** for details and registration.