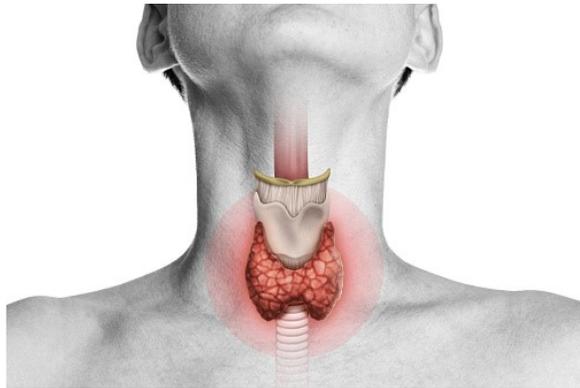
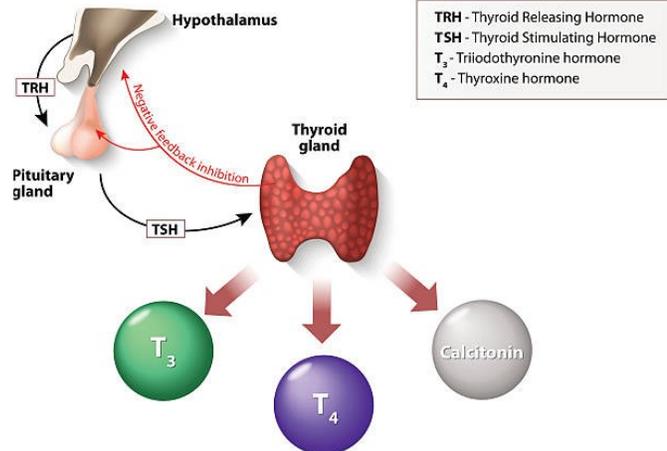


Thyroid Awareness Month



THYROID HORMONES



The thyroid gland, located in the front of the neck just below the Adam's apple, takes iodine from the diet and makes thyroid hormone. Thyroid hormone affects a person's physical energy, temperature, weight and mood.

Thyroid diseases generally fall into two broad groups of disorders: abnormal function and abnormal growth (nodules) in the gland. These problems are common in the general population, especially among older people and women. Most thyroid problems can be detected and treated.

Functional disorders are usually related to the gland producing too little thyroid hormone (hypothyroidism) or too much thyroid hormone (hyperthyroidism).

Benign nodules in the thyroid gland are common and do not usually cause serious health problems. These nodules occur when the cell growth within the nodule is abnormal. Nodules can occasionally put pressure on the neck and cause trouble with swallowing, breathing or speaking if they are too large. The thyroid usually functions normally even when nodules are present.

Thyroid cancers are much less common than benign nodules. With treatment, the cure rate for thyroid cancer is more than 90 percent.

There are two standard blood tests of thyroid function: the measurement of thyroid hormone, usually T4, and the measurement of thyrotropin (TSH). TSH is a hormone secreted from the pituitary gland that controls how much thyroid hormone the thyroid makes.

Abnormal blood tests usually reveal thyroid function problems and not the presence of thyroid nodules or cancer.

The treatment of thyroid disease depends on many factors, including the type and severity of the thyroid disorder and the age and overall health of the patient. Treatment must be specific to each individual.

- Thyroid cancer is initially treated with thyroid surgery. Many patients also receive further treatment with iodine-131. Patients treated for thyroid cancer require lifelong thyroid hormone replacement.
- The majority of benign nodules do not require treatment. Patients with benign nodules are usually advised to have periodic follow-up examinations.
- Hypothyroidism usually requires only replacement of thyroid hormone by taking a single daily tablet at a dose adjusted to produce normal thyroid hormone levels.
- Autoimmune thyroiditis is a disorder that may cause hypothyroidism. It usually does not cause symptoms that require treatment unless hypothyroidism develops. In such cases, thyroid hormone replacement is required.

Treatment of hyperthyroidism may include antithyroid drugs, radioactive iodine-131 or in rare cases, thyroid surgery.

Content source: *Division of Cancer Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,*