

# Hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid) is when your thyroid gland makes too much thyroid hormone. This hormone is produced by your thyroid gland, located in the lower front part of your neck. The thyroid hormone works to regulate your metabolism, which is the process your body uses to turn food into energy. Having hyperthyroidism increases your metabolism, which can affect your heart, muscles, bones, and weight.

## Symptoms

Most people with mild hyperthyroidism have few or no symptoms. If your hyperthyroidism is severe, you may have one or more of these symptoms.

- Rapid or irregular heartbeat (palpitations)
- Shaking or unsteadiness in hands or legs
- Increase in sweating or feeling hot
- Unexplained weight loss
- Insomnia
- Anxiety, nervousness, or irritability
- Fatigue
- Muscle weakness
- Frequent bowel movements or diarrhea
- Hair loss or a change in hair or skin texture
- Increase in appetite

## Causes

Hyperthyroidism has several possible causes.

The most common cause is Graves' disease, which is a disorder of the immune system. The body produces an antibody that stimulates the thyroid to make too much thyroid hormone. Graves' disease can run in families with a history of thyroid problems. Another cause is benign (noncancerous) thyroid lumps or growths (nodules).

Less commonly, hyperthyroidism can be caused by:

- Thyroiditis (inflammation of the thyroid gland) or goiter (enlarged thyroid gland).
- Intake of too much iodine from food, medications, or imaging contrast dye (such as dye used in CT scans).

## Diagnosis

Your doctor may give you a physical exam and order thyroid imaging tests and blood tests. It's important to tell your doctor about all the medications and supplements you're taking.

## Treatment

Hyperthyroidism can lead to serious health problems, so your doctor will recommend treatment even if your symptoms don't bother you. Your doctor may recommend a beta-blocker medication to help you feel better while you get started with other treatments.

Your treatment options will depend on several factors, including your age. Sometimes more than one type of treatment is needed. This may include:

- **Radioactive iodine.** This would be prescribed if you have Graves' disease, a goiter, or an overactive thyroid nodule. Most people need to take just one dose to resolve their condition.
- **Antithyroid medication.** This prevents your thyroid gland from overproducing thyroid hormone. Most people can stop taking medication after 1 to 2 years. Others may need to continue for many years.

During and after treatment, you'll need regular blood testing. The results show whether your thyroid hormone level is normal.

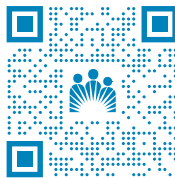
If you have thyroiditis, your doctor may recommend anti-inflammatory medications. You may also need to take thyroid hormone supplements for several months to a year, until your thyroid recovers from the inflammation.

Surgery is rarely recommended for hyperthyroidism.

## We're here to help

To learn more about managing hyperthyroidism, visit:

- [kpdoc.org/hyperthyroidism](http://kpdoc.org/hyperthyroidism)



- [kpdoc.org/radioiodine](http://kpdoc.org/radioiodine)



This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist.