



IODINE

The Hidden Deficiency That Could Be Causing Your Health Problems

by Nan Kathryn Fuchs, Ph.D.

In 1940, the typical American diet contained 500–800 micrograms a day of iodine. By 1995, that daily intake had dropped down to 135 mcg. Seaweed provides a great natural source of iodine and many varieties are actually very tasty. The regular consumption of seaweed could even restore your thyroid function.

IODINE DEFICIENCY could be causing many of your health problems. That's not all. This common mineral found in seaweed could be the first non-plant adaptogen—a substance that helps to regulate many body functions including the thyroid. This means it can work for people with an underactive or overactive thyroid. To follow are eight secrets about this amazing nutrient. If you read on, I think you'll see why I call it the best-kept health secret of all.

SECRET #1 Your thyroid could be low even when your tests are normal.

If you don't get enough iodine in your diet, it allows other substances that interfere with thyroid function and the central nervous system to wreak havoc. These include chlorine, fluoride, and bromide. Their ability to cause problems depends on how much iodide (a form of iodine) your body contains. Sufficient iodine and iodide compete with bromide. This means that bromide can't be utilized in the thyroid. Iodide also reduces the toxicity of fluoride.

If you have a hot tub, you probably use chloride or bromide as a disinfectant. Both can lower your iodine levels. Bromine is also found in some pesticides—another reason to eat organic food whenever possible.

You may have been told that your thyroid tests are normal. Yet, if you are frequently cold and constipated and have

brittle hair and unexplained fatigue, your thyroid gland may not be functioning optimally.

You may not be aware of this, but hypothyroidism is an epidemic. One in ten women in this country have been diagnosed with thyroid problems. Some endocrinologists believe that as many as one in four women have either an underactive or overactive thyroid.

Why are our diets lower in iodine than ever before? In the 1960s, we got more iodine from the bread we ate. Iodine-containing dough conditioners added 150 mcg of iodine to each slice! But over the past 20 years, food processors have substituted this conditioner with bromine, a substance that opposes every iodine and actually contributes to goiters. So instead of getting a little iodine in every slice of bread you eat, you're now getting a little bromine. The problem is that bromine lowers your iodine levels even further.

What about just using iodized salt to increase your iodine intake? Simply put, it won't work. Iodine was originally added to salt to prevent goiters. Iodized table salt contains 74 mcg of iodine for every gram of salt. Sea salt, soy sauce, and Bragg's liquid amino acids are all salty condiments that contain no iodine. To get sufficient iodine you'd need to eat 168 grams of salt every day! A healthy Western diet contains less than 0.500 milligrams (mg) a day—including whatever is naturally found in our foods. You can't safely

eat enough iodized salt to reverse an iodine deficiency.

SECRET #2 Not all forms of iodine are safe.

Getting enough iodine in your diet is vital to preventing many health problems. But you have to make sure you're getting the right type of iodine. There are two forms of iodine: iodine 127, (safe, natural dietary iodine) and iodine 131 (a harmful, radioactive byproduct of nuclear energy). Your body absorbs and retains any kind of iodine to which it is exposed. Most of it is deposited in your thyroid gland or breast tissues. These are the two places that use the highest amounts of iodine.

SECRET #3 Seaweed improves low thyroid function.

The good news is, there's an easy way to get dietary iodine and fight off all these dangerous substances. Seaweed provides a safe form of dietary iodine for better thyroid function and healthier breast tissues. It also protects you from the harmful effects of radioactive iodine. The regular consumption of seaweed could even restore your thyroid function.

You can eat as much of it as your body wants. There are red and brown seaweeds (although they don't look either red or brown). Brown seaweeds are highest in iodine. They include all forms of kelp. Focus, also known as Bladder-wrack, is considered to be the best for underactive thyroids because it contains the most iodine. Hijiki and Sargassum are two other forms of brown seaweeds. Red seaweeds include dulse, nori, Irish moss, and Gracilaria.

If you've been told that your thyroid is borderline-low, eating seaweed makes sense. But remember, if you're iodine-deficient, you need to eat seaweed every day or take iodine in a different form.

If you're taking thyroid medication and want to try seaweed, you may want to call Dr. Drum first for a consultation. The protocol for taking seaweed while on thyroid hormone replacement

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Iodine: The Hidden Deficiency

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is different from the one I've described. Instead of using seaweed to boost your iodine levels, you might consider using an iodine supplement. Some contain iodine alone, while others have both iodine and iodide.

SECRET #4 An iodine supplement should also contain iodide.

The form of iodine you take determines where it will go and which parts of your body it can help. While both thyroid and breast tissues need iodine, your thyroid gland prefers it in a form called iodide. Iodide is a reduced form of an iodine compound containing potassium. Textbooks on endocrinology say that iodine by itself is sufficient since it is converted into iodide in the intestines. But a study using both iodine and iodide indicates our thyroid gland functions better when iodide is included. Research endocrinologist, Guy E. Abraham, M.D., developed both a test to determine iodine sufficiency and an iodine product designed to reverse this deficiency.

His supplement is a high-potency iodine/potassium iodide tablet containing 5 mg of iodine and 7.5 mg of potassium iodide. Doctors will recognize this as a tablet form of an iodine solution called Lugol's solution, a well-absorbed form of iodine that has been used for 180 years. The tablet is called Iodoral, and it's available through several sources to anyone who has been found by their doctors or by Dr. Abraham's test to be iodine-deficient.

SECRET #5 Your iodine level can now be measured accurately.

At one time, people would paint a circle of tincture of iodine on their inner arm to see whether or not they were iodine-deficient. The thought was that if you were not deficient in iodine, this iodine-patch would disappear in from twenty minutes to two hours. But if it was visible for more than four hours, your iodine level was just low. It's not a particularly accurate way to measure your iodine level. But until recently, it was all that was available.

Now there's a simple twenty-four hour urine test developed by Dr. Abraham that measures the amount of iodide in your urine using an ion-selective electrode (ISE) following an oral intake of iodine/iodide. The ISE method to measure urinary iodide has been tested effectively on more than 4,000 Japanese men and women by Japanese researchers.



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SECRET #6 A deficiency of iodine can increase your risk for breast cancer.

This is because iodine is highly concentrated in breast tissues. When radioactive iodine breaks down in your breast, it can contribute to breast cancer. And, if you remember, dietary iodine blocks the absorption of this harmful iodine.

Low iodine can increase the production of estrogens, and your lifetime exposure to estrogens increases your risk for breast cancer. Iodine normalizes the effect of estrogens on breast tissues.

SECRET #7 Iodine is more than a mineral.

Iodine is also an adaptogen. Adaptogens are substances that help normalize various bodily functions. Usually, adaptogens are herbs like *Rhodiola rosea* or *Cordyceps* mushrooms. Now we're seeing that iodine, so crucial to good health, may in fact be the ultimate adaptogen. Studies show that if you take enough iodine (100 to 400 times the RDA) it helps to regulate other body functions as well.

SECRET #8 You may need iodine even if you're healthy.

If you suffer from any chronic illness, including cancer, you need to have Dr. Abraham's twenty-four hour urine test performed to measure your iodine levels. I even suggest this test for healthy individuals, as it may help prevent disease from occurring.

I took this test several years ago and discovered I was low in iodine—and I'm very healthy. After taking his iodine supplement, Iodoral, for several months I noticed more mental clarity, increased energy, and a better complexion. These positive effects disappeared when I stopped taking it.

The implications for getting sufficient iodine are vast. Forward-thinking doctors are seeing that iodine may hold the key to their patients' health problems. Until you have been tested, and have achieved iodine sufficiency, you won't know how vital iodine is to your own health. **Sc**

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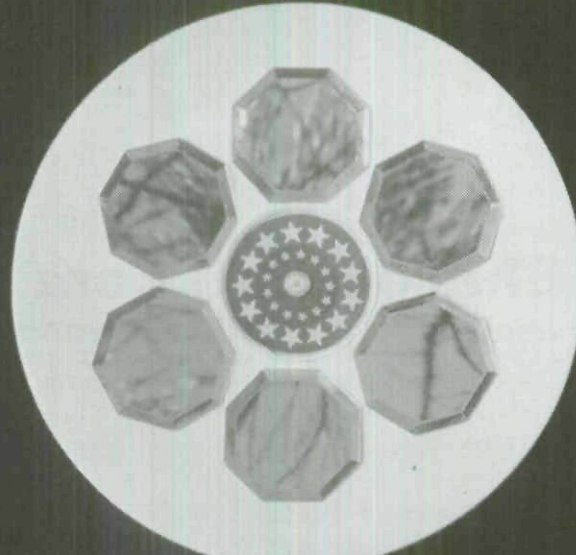
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