

Hyperthyroidism (Overactive Thyroid)



What Is Hyperthyroidism?

The thyroid is a small gland in the neck. It makes hormones that control how the body uses energy. Hyperthyroidism, or overactive thyroid, is when the thyroid gland makes too many hormones. The extra hormones speed up the functions of your body, which can cause health problems. Overactive thyroid is more common in women, and can be caused by:

- Grave's disease
- Certain medicines
- Swelling of the thyroid gland
- Abnormal growths or nodules within the thyroid



What Are the Warning Signs of Hyperthyroidism?

- Feeling too hot and sweating more than usual
- Fast heartbeat
- Feeling tired
- Muscle weakness
- Shaky hands
- Weight loss, even if you are more hungry
- Diarrhea or frequent bowel movements
- Changes in your menstrual period and infertility
- Eye irritation or discomfort



How Is Hyperthyroidism Diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask you about your symptoms and do a physical exam. A blood test may be ordered to check hormone levels. Your doctor may also order tests to see how well your thyroid is working or if there are any lumps in your thyroid gland.



How Is Hyperthyroidism Treated?

- Medicines may be used to lower the amount of hormones your thyroid gland makes and to control your symptoms.
- In rare cases, you may need to have your thyroid inactivated, or removed.

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Questions for My Doctor

- What is causing my overactive thyroid?
- What treatment option is best for me?
- What are the side effects of treatment?
- How long will I have to take medicine for my thyroid?
- When will my symptoms go away?
- Is there anything I can do to make symptoms go away faster?
- Can I keep doing the things I like to do?
- Will my thyroid need to be removed?



Bottom Line

- Hyperthyroidism is when the thyroid gland makes too many hormones. These extra hormones speed up the functions of your body and can cause health problems.
- Some symptoms of overactive thyroid are feeling more hot and sweaty than usual, fast heartbeat, feeling tired, muscle weakness, weight loss, diarrhea, and eye irritation.
- Your doctor can use blood and other tests to diagnose overactive thyroid.
- Treatment may include medicines to reduce the amount of hormones your thyroid makes and to control your symptoms. In some cases, the thyroid may need to be inactivated or removed surgically.

For More Information

- **MedlinePlus:** www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/thyroiddiseases.html
- **American Thyroid Association:** www.thyroid.org/wp-content/uploads/patients/brochures/Hyper_brochure.pdf
- **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases:** www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/endocrine/hyperthyroidism/Pages/fact-sheet.aspx

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