

Who are We?

The Thyroid Foundation of Canada was founded in Kingston by Diana Meltzer Abramsky in 1980. It grew from the concerns and feelings of isolation of thyroid patients and their families. These feelings were largely due to the lack of adequate information available on thyroid disease and lack of support groups for discussion of mutual problems and frustrations.

A growing network of chapters is being developed across Canada. The Foundation has raised funds to support thyroid research and awards have been granted for a variety of projects. Grants from government and corporate sources have been received for the production of educational material in English and French.

What are Our Aims?

- To awaken public interest in, and awareness of, thyroid disease;
- To lend moral support to thyroid patients and their families;
- To assist in fund raising for thyroid disease research.

What do we provide?

THYROBULLETIN

is the Foundation's quarterly publication. It presents up-to-date information on thyroid disease and chapter events for members.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

is available free or at reduced rates for members and interested individuals and organizations.

PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETINGS

on aspects of thyroid disease are presented by local chapters, free to members and the public.

What can you do?

We need you – as a member, a donor or a volunteer. The success of this organization depends on the efforts of many dedicated individuals who choose to become involved. For more information contact the chapter in your area or National Headquarters if there is no chapter.

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Important Notice – The information contained within is for general information only and consequently cannot be considered as medical advice to any person. For individual treatment or diagnosis consult your health care professional.

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THYROID DISEASE ...

KNOW THE FACTS



Thyroid Foundation of Canada

La Fondation canadienne de la Thyroïde

Thyroid Disease is a world-wide reality

About 200 million people in the world have some form of thyroid disease. Yet before the founding of the Thyroid Foundation of Canada in 1980, no lay organization existed in North America to promote public education about thyroid disease and to promote public support of thyroid research.

Thyroid disorders for the most part are treatable; however, untreated thyroid disease can produce serious results in other parts of the body. Improved public awareness and understanding of thyroid disorders will enable patients and their families to cope more effectively with the sometimes disturbing course of thyroid illness. In this way individuals will also be better equipped to play a role in alerting their physicians to a suspected thyroid condition that may otherwise be difficult to diagnose in the sometimes slowly developing initial phases.

Facts

The thyroid gland

The thyroid gland is a small gland at the base of the neck. It weighs only about 25 grams. However, the hormones it secretes are essential to all growth and metabolism. The gland is a regulator of all body functions.

Prevalence of thyroid disease

In Canada thyroid disorders are estimated to affect one in twenty. Most thyroid disorders are 5-7 times more common in women.

Types of thyroid disease

There are many types of thyroid disease. However, the main conditions present in most thyroid illnesses are **Hypothyroidism** (thyroid underactivity) and **Hyperthyroidism** (thyroid overactivity).

Thyroid nodules

Thyroid nodules are common and treatable but should always be investigated since a small proportion of them are cancerous. Thyroid cancer, although uncommon, can in the majority of cases be successfully treated. Patients who received X-ray treatment

for acne and conditions of the thymus, adenoids, tonsils and skin during the 1940's and 1950's are at greater risk of thyroid cancer and should be examined by a thyroid specialist.

Symptoms of thyroid disease

Signs and symptoms of hypothyroid and hyperthyroid conditions include:

HYPOTHYROIDISM

- weak slow heart beat
- muscular weakness and constant fatigue
- sensitivity to cold
- thick puffy skin
- slowed mental processes and poor memory
- constipation
- goitre

HYPERTHYROIDISM

- rapid forceful heartbeat
- tremor
- muscular weakness
- weight loss in spite of increased appetite
- restlessness, anxiety and sleeplessness
- profuse sweating and heat intolerance
- diarrhea
- eye changes
- goitre

Each person's experience of thyroid illness differs depending on a number of factors; a patient will not necessarily have all the above symptoms. A physician should be consulted if thyroid illness is suspected.

The emotional aspects of thyroid illness

There may be emotional reactions to thyroid illness. Hyperthyroid patients often feel unusually nervous or irritable. Hypothyroid patients can feel unusual fatigue or depression. It is important for thyroid patients and their families to understand that these reactions are common and likely to resolve with treatment. It is also important to realize that some thyroid disorders develop very gradually. Since symptoms may not be easily recognized at first, subtle

reactions in emotions or behaviour may be the only visible signs of thyroid disorder in the beginning stages.

The need for monitoring

Thyroid patients require life-long monitoring. Patients who believe they have been completely cured of their thyroid illness should discuss the need for follow-up with their family physicians or thyroid specialists.

The purpose of newborn screening

Canada is a world leader in developing screening methods for the detection of the serious disorder of congenital hypothyroidism. As a result, most North American hospitals now screen for this disease. One baby in 4000-5000 is being identified in Canada by screening tests. Thus the serious mental retardation and growth defects that can result from congenital hypothyroidism are being prevented. However, early identification and treatment are absolutely essential.

The need for further research

Further thyroid research is necessary to continue the progress that has been made in diagnosis and treatment. Although there are effective treatments for most thyroid disorders, the underlying causes require further investigation. The continued study of the thyroid may yield important knowledge in other areas of medical science. However, public support of thyroid research is vital.