

HealthyBy Choice

...One Day at a Time

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Thyroid Awareness Month

The thyroid gland is a small, butterfly-shaped organ located at the base of the neck, in front of the windpipe. It is the 'master controller' of metabolism and plays a key role in our health and wellbeing. It makes, stores, and releases thyroid hormones into the blood, thus regulating metabolism. These hormones are essential for the proper functioning of all bodily tissues and organs. They enable our body to use its stores of energy efficiently, thereby controlling temperature and allowing our muscles to work properly. Making sure that your thyroid gland is healthy is important to your body's overall well-being.

The thyroid gland manufactures two essential hormones – thyroxine (also known as T4) and tri-iodothyronine (also known as T3) – and issues them into the network of tiny blood vessels that run through the gland. The numbers simply refer to the amount of atoms of iodine contained in the hormones. T3 is the more powerful while T4 is released by the thyroid in larger amounts, but is mostly converted to T3 in the liver and kidneys.

The effect of T3 and T4 is to increase the basal metabolic rate of almost all the cells in the body--increase the fat and carbohydrate metabolism--boost protein synthesis--increase heart rate and blood flow to other organs.

Some patients who have an enlarged thyroid gland may also produce too much or too little thyroid hormone. Because many symptoms of thyroid imbalance may be hard to recognize and may be mistaken for symptoms caused by other conditions, the best way to know for sure about your thyroid health is to ask your doctor for a TSH (thyroid-stimulating hormone) test, a simple blood test that measures whether your thyroid gland is functioning normally. TSH is produced by the pituitary gland in response to the levels of T3 and T4. If you have a family member with thyroid disease, are over the age of 60, or have any symptoms or risk factors associated with thyroid disease, you should talk to your doctor about getting a TSH test.

Thyroid Neck Check

An estimated 15 million of Americans have undiagnosed thyroid problems. To help with early detection and in some cases help you find lumps or enlargements in the neck that may point to a thyroid condition, you can perform a simple Neck Check self-exam. Here is a step-by-step guide.

How to take the Thyroid Neck Check...

All you will need is: A handheld mirror and a glass of water

1. Hold the mirror in your hand, focusing on the lower front area of your neck, above the collarbones, and below the voice box (larynx). Your thyroid gland is located in this area of your neck.
2. While focusing on this area in the mirror, tip your head back.
3. Take a drink of water and swallow.
4. As you swallow, look at your neck. Check for any bulges or protrusions in this area when you swallow. Reminder: Don't confuse the Adam's apple with the thyroid gland. The thyroid gland is located further down on your neck, closer to the collarbone. You may want to repeat this process several times.
5. If you do see any bulges or protrusions in this area, see your physician. You may have an enlarged thyroid gland or a thyroid nodule that should be checked to determine whether further evaluation is needed.



May Good Fortune and Good Health be Yours in 2015!



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January is National Blood Donor Month

The American Red Cross needs you to make a resolution to give blood regularly in 2015, beginning with National Blood Donor Month in January. National Blood Donor Month recognizes the importance of giving blood and platelets while honoring those who roll up a sleeve to help patients in need.

It has been observed during January since 1970, and that's no coincidence. Winter is an especially difficult time to collect enough blood to meet patient needs. Unpredictable winter weather can result in blood drive cancellations...and seasonal illnesses, like the flu, may cause some donors to be unable to make or keep blood donation appointments.

Individuals of all blood types are needed, especially those with O negative, A negative and B negative. With a shelf life of 42 days, red blood cells must be constantly replenished to maintain an adequate supply for patients.

At a Red Cross Donation Center:

- Donating blood is a safe process. A sterile needle is used only once for each donor and then discarded.
- Blood donation is a simple four-step process: registration, medical history and mini-physical, donation and refreshments.
- Every blood donor is given a mini-physical, checking the donor's temperature, blood pressure, pulse and hemoglobin to ensure it is safe for the donor to give blood.
- The actual blood donation typically takes less than 10-12 minutes. The entire process, from the time you arrive to the time you leave, takes about an hour and 15 min.
- The average adult has about 10 pints of blood in his body. Roughly 1 pint is given during a donation.
- A healthy donor may donate red blood cells every 56 days, or double red cells every 112 days.
- A healthy donor may donate platelets as few as 7 days apart, but a maximum of 24 times a year.
- All donated blood is tested for HIV, hepatitis B and C, syphilis and other infectious diseases before it can be released to hospitals.

Remember...

- Blood transfusions save lives.
- There's no substitute for human blood.
- Every three seconds, someone needs a blood transfusion.
- About 1 in 7 people entering a hospital need blood.
- More than 41,000 blood donations are needed every day.
- A car accident victim can require as many as 100 pints of blood.
- A pint of blood, separated in to components, can help up to three people.
- It's safe, simple and it saves lives.



Visit www.redcrossblood.org for additional information regarding donating blood, including whether or not you are eligible, and locations of blood drives and donor centers near you.



Out with old bad habits...in with new healthy ones!

