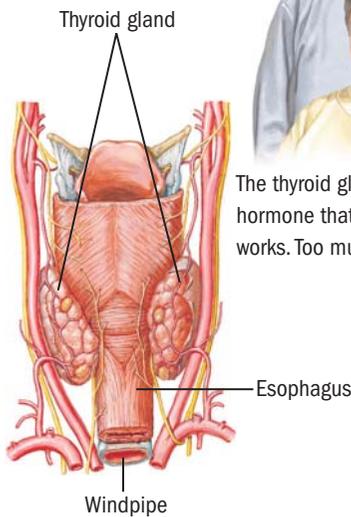
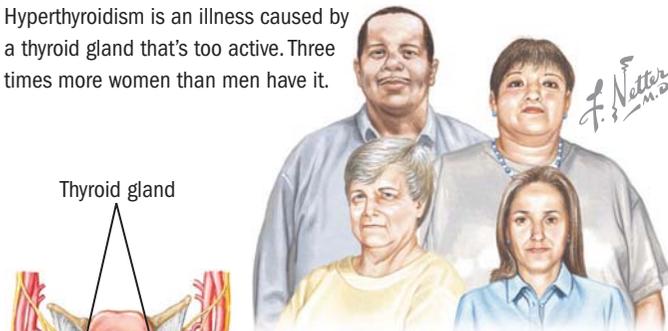
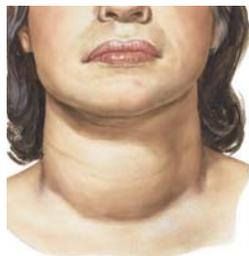


# MANAGING YOUR HYPERTHYROIDISM

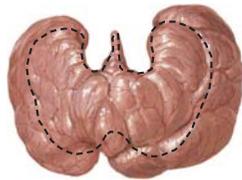
Hyperthyroidism is an illness caused by a thyroid gland that's too active. Three times more women than men have it.



The thyroid gland, in the neck, makes thyroid hormone that controls the rate at which the body works. Too much hormone causes symptoms.



Goiter



Dashed line shows normal gland size



Bulging eyes, eye irritation

The most common cause is Graves' disease. People with this disease have an enlarged thyroid gland (goiter) and may have bulging eyeballs (exophthalmos). Other causes are thyroiditis, toxic adenoma, and using too much thyroid medicine. Sometimes the cause isn't known.

## Symptoms include



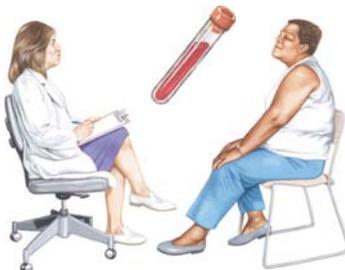
Nervousness, fatigue, sweating



Weight loss



Frequent bowel movements or diarrhea



Your doctor makes a diagnosis from a medical history, physical examination, and blood tests. A thyroid scan or ultrasonography may be done. The doctor may also suggest seeing an endocrinologist.

## What Is Hyperthyroidism?

Hyperthyroidism is an illness caused by a thyroid gland that's too active. The thyroid gland is located in the neck and makes thyroid hormone. This hormone controls the rate at which the body works. Too much hormone causes symptoms of hyperthyroidism. Three times more women than men have an overactive thyroid.

## What Causes Hyperthyroidism?

The most common cause is a condition called Graves' disease. This disease causes 80% to 90% of cases. This disease is thought to be autoimmune. Autoimmune means that the body's own immune system attacks certain organs in one's body. In Graves' disease, the thyroid gland is attacked. Other less common causes include thyroiditis, toxic adenoma, and using too much thyroid medicine. Thyroiditis is inflammation of the thyroid. An adenoma is a thyroid tumor that makes thyroid hormone. Sometimes the cause isn't known. This illness can run in families, but it's not contagious.

## What Are the Symptoms of Hyperthyroidism?

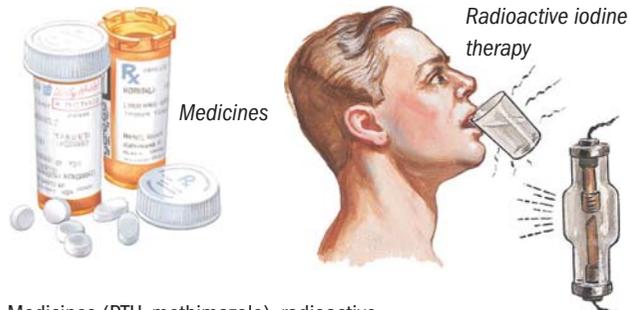
Symptoms include nervousness, sweating, fatigue, and fast or skipped heartbeats or other heart rhythm abnormalities such as atrial fibrillation. Others are eye irritation, weight loss, sensitivity to heat, and frequent bowel movements or diarrhea. People with Graves' disease have an enlarged thyroid gland (goiter) and may have bulging eyeballs (exophthalmos).

## How Is Hyperthyroidism Diagnosed?

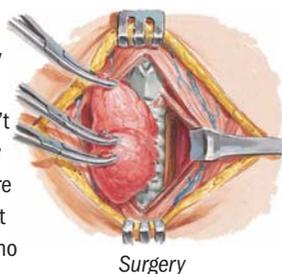
The doctor makes a diagnosis from the medical history, physical examination, and blood tests to measure blood thyroid hormone levels. The doctor may also order a thyroid scan or ultrasonography to get pictures of the thyroid gland.

The doctor may also suggest seeing a thyroid specialist (endocrinologist).

## MANAGING YOUR HYPERTHYROIDISM



Medicines (PTU, methimazole), radioactive therapy, and surgery lower thyroid hormone levels. Radioactive iodine is used to destroy the thyroid. Radiotherapy is best for people older than 21 and younger people who can't control the disease with medicines. Surgery is for people with large thyroids that interfere with neck structures, people who don't want radioactive iodine, and pregnant women, who shouldn't use radioactive iodine.



Don't exercise until your illness is controlled.



Don't smoke! Smoking may worsen eye problems from Graves' disease. Protect your eyes by wearing sunglasses and using artificial tears if you have exophthalmos.



Call your doctor if you have palpitations, serious weight loss, diarrhea, tremors, restlessness, anxiety, or mood swings.



### How Is Hyperthyroidism Treated?

Thyroid hormone levels are lowered with medicines, radiation therapy, or surgery. Medicines may be needed for a few months, a few years, or more. Ones that prevent thyroid hormone production include propylthiouracil (PTU) and methimazole. They can be used as the main therapy or to prepare for other treatments.

Radioactive iodine is used to destroy the thyroid. This therapy is best for people older than 21 and younger people who can't control their disease with medicines.

Surgery is for people with large thyroid glands that block or interfere with other structures in the neck. People who don't want to use radioactive iodine may have surgery. Pregnant women may also need surgery.

### DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Hyperthyroidism:

- ✓ **DO** protect your eyes if you have eye complications of Graves' disease. Use sunglasses and artificial tears, and wear eye protection at night.
- ✓ **DO** remember that radioactive iodine shouldn't be used during pregnancy. It may cause an underactive thyroid condition in the baby.
- ✓ **DO** realize that successful treatment means that you need lifelong care. The doctor must check you for onset of an underactive thyroid gland (hypothyroidism) after treatment and for possible recurrence of hyperthyroidism.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have palpitations, serious weight loss, diarrhea, or tremors.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have restlessness, anxiety, or mood swings.
- ⊗ **DON'T** do physical exercise until your illness is controlled.
- ⊗ **DON'T** smoke. Smoking may worsen eye problems.
- ⊗ **DON'T** forget that complications of surgery may include paralysis of vocal cords, underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism), and calcium problems. Calcium problems can result if parathyroid glands are accidentally removed.
- ⊗ **DON'T** forget that hyperthyroidism may recur after surgery in 10% to 15% of people.

### FROM THE DESK OF

#### NOTES

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### Contact the following sources:

- American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists  
Tel: (904) 353-7878  
Website: <http://www.ace.com>
- Thyroid Foundation of America  
Tel: (800) 832-8321  
Website: <http://www.allthyroid.org>