

Health Connect

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Greetings from GHPL.

Every year, 25th of May is celebrated as the World Thyroid Day, marking it as a day to promote awareness and understanding of thyroid health and the advances made in treating thyroid diseases. Thyroid disorders are affecting women as well as men with serious consequences leading to heart problems, mental health issues and infertility. Hence, this issue's main article focuses on 'Thyroid'.

Vacation and travel go hand in hand. Daadi Maa Kee Potli brings out some dietary tips for healthy snacking during travel.

Latest research suggests that snoring is not only annoying but an early sign of future health risks. Snoring can lead to poor sleep and daytime fatigue, irritability and increased health problems including cardiovascular disease. In relation to this, we have interviewed Dr. Srinivas Sistila, M.B.B.S., M.S. (ENT), Star Hospital, Hyderabad in which he shares his thoughts on 'Snoring' and risks associated with it.

We hope you find this issue interesting and informative. Do share with us your thoughts and comments.


Saigeeta Dikshit

Editor, Health Connect and
CAO & Director, Good Health TPA Services Ltd.

THYROID

Thyroid diseases are arguably, among the commonest endocrine disorders worldwide. India too, is no exception. According to a projection from various studies on thyroid disease, it has been estimated that about 42 million people in India suffer from thyroid diseases. Thyroid diseases are different from other diseases in terms of their ease of diagnosis, accessibility of medical treatment and the relative visibility that even a small swelling of the thyroid offers to the treating physician. Early diagnosis and treatment remains the cornerstone of management.¹

Figures indicate that thyroid disorders attacks close to 12 million people, annually, and yet the unfortunate part is that many don't even know about it. The disease is more prevalent among women, who are three times more likely to be affected by hypothyroidism than men, especially those in the age group of 46-54 years.

Most Common Types of Thyroid

Hypothyroidism: is a condition when the thyroid gland secretes too little thyroid hormones resulting in symptoms such as fatigue, thinning hair, cold intolerance and a puffy face. Several conditions can cause hypothyroidism which includes radiation treatment to the neck, Hashimoto's disease and surgical removal of the thyroid gland. Treatment for hypothyroidism is synthetic thyroxine.

Hyperthyroidism: is a condition in which the thyroid gland produces and secretes too much thyroid hormones: triiodothyronine and thyroxine. The overproduction of these thyroid hormones can cause symptoms such as an increased appetite, tremors, rapid heartbeat and an increased sensitivity to heat. More than 70% of hyperthyroidism cases are caused by Graves' disease. Treatments for hyperthyroidism include radioactive iodine, surgery, anti-thyroid medicine and beta blockers.

Thyroiditis: is a group of disorders that cause inflammation in the thyroid gland. There are several types of thyroiditis: postpartum thyroiditis, sub-acute thyroiditis, silent thyroiditis, Hashimoto's thyroiditis², acute thyroiditis, drug-induced thyroiditis and radiation-induced thyroiditis. Thyroiditis can cause hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism or both. For example, with postpartum thyroiditis, patients start having symptom of hyperthyroidism, followed by symptoms of hypothyroidism.

¹ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3169866/>

² It is an autoimmune disorder & is also known as chronic lymphatic thyroiditis



Daadi Maa Kee Potli

(from the Grandmother's closet)



Tips for healthy snacking during travel

Its vacation time and yes travel time too. Here are some tips for healthy snacks along the way:

Dry Fruits - They are an excellent source of energy. They do not require refrigeration and can be easily carried. Among the various dry fruit choices almonds, cashews, groundnut, walnuts, dates, pistachios and raisins are the best bet.

Homemade Food - Methi thepla with dry groundnut chutney or plain oil-free parathas are the best option. For short trip, consider idlis, tamarind rice, lemon rice, curd rice, etc.

Fruits - the best fruits for travel would be Apples, Pears, Oranges & Pomegranates. Avoid bananas as they tend to get mushy.

Vegetables- Carry some vegetable salad made of cucumber and tomatoes. This is nutritious & filling. It is also low in calories and hence ideal for all diet freaks at the time of travel. Low-fat yogurt / hung curd jazzed with chat masala and pepper can be used as dip and it tastes yummy with long sliced cucumber.



Baked Items- Carry a pack of whole wheat/multigrain, cream-free biscuits. And as even kids like to have it, there wouldn't be any problem at the time of travel. Carrying carrot/banana cake made of wheat flour is also one of the healthy food ideas while travelling. Another option would be to carry Brown /Multigrain bread and mint or coriander chutneys. Honey Sandwiches also taste yum.

Water & Fruit Juices - Drink plenty of fluids during the trip. Choose water over other beverages (if possible). Carry lemon, salt & sugar for preparing lemon juice. Drink available fresh fruit juices en-route.

Tea Bags - Pack mint, green, lemon or ginger tea bags. Hot water is generally available.

Nutrition Bars - Many nutrition bars are available in the market that are made of healthy & nutritious ingredients like oats and milk. Also, homemade bars like that of groundnut and jaggery / dry dates, dry coconut and jaggery / wheat and jaggery, etc. could be considered. They provide with the necessary calories of the day. So, keep such nutrition bars handy.

Carry only the ones depending on the taste of family members. They will make the journey all the more comfortable and healthy as well. 😊

Postpartum Thyroiditis: is an inflammation of the thyroid in women after the delivery of a baby. It is caused by anti-thyroid (anti-thyroid peroxidase, anti-thyroglobulin) antibodies that attack the thyroid and cause inflammation.

Goiter disorders: It simply describes enlargement of the thyroid gland, regardless of cause. It is not a specific disease per se. It may be associated with hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism or normal thyroid function. The most common cause of goiter worldwide is iodine deficiency in the diet.

Thyroid cancer³: It is far more common among adult women than men or youth. About two-third of cases occur in people under the age of 55. There are different kinds of thyroid cancer, depending upon the specific cell type within the thyroid that has become cancerous. Most cases of thyroid cancer have a good prognosis and high survival rates, especially when diagnosed in its early stages.

Causes

- Graves' disease: An auto-immune condition and the commonest cause of an overactive thyroid gland
- Toxic adenomas
- Sub-acute thyroiditis
- Pituitary gland malfunctions or cancerous growths in the thyroid gland
- Hashimoto's disease: In this autoimmune disorder, the body's own immune system attacks thyroid tissue, leading to reduced thyroid hormone
- Removal of the thyroid gland
- Exposure to excessive amounts of iodide
- Treatment with Lithium

Symptoms

- Abnormal weight gain/loss
- Neck enlargement
- Depression
- Menstrual changes / Frequent and heavy menstrual flow
- Nervousness and tremor
- Mental fogginess and poor concentration
- Feeling bloated
- Racing heartbeat
- Aches and pains
- High cholesterol levels
- Heat intolerance / Feeling cold

Diagnosis

Thyroid disease has complex causes and arises as a result of a combination of environmental, nutritional and lifestyle factors. Generally the doctor would recommend thyroid profiling.

³ http://www.medicinenet.com/thyroid_disorders/page3.htm#goiter

Thyroid... contd...# 2

- **Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH) test:** A TSH test will determine whether symptoms are due to a thyroid related problem or not. Lower TSH levels indicate hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid) or decreased production of TSH due to an underlying condition. Higher TSH values indicate hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) or thyroid tumour.
- **FT4 test:** T4 test is also known as thyroxine test. It stands for free thyroxine. Both T3 and T4 hormones are circulated in the blood attached to a carrier protein. However, bound hormone molecules cannot be used by the cells. Only the ones that freely circulate in the blood or are in the unbound state can be taken up by the cells. Therefore, free thyroxine in the blood is an accurate measure of hormone responsible for activities carried out by the cells.
- **FT3 test:** T3 test is useful for diagnosing and determining the severity of hyperthyroidism. Just as FT4, levels of FT3 are also determined in the free or unbound state.
- **Antibody testing for thyroid disorders** may be recommended mainly if there is a family history of thyroid problem or the person has been diagnosed with autoimmune condition like rheumatoid arthritis. These antibody tests help to find out if the body produces auto-antibodies (antibodies against self-cells) against the thyroid gland.
- **TPO-Microsomal antibody Test:** TPO Microsomal antibody is also called Anti-thyroid Peroxidase Antibody. These antibodies are raised in a condition called Hashimoto's disease or autoimmune thyroiditis, where the cells of the thyroid gland are destroyed.
- **ATA-Thyroglobulin antibody Test:** These antibodies are also found in Hashimoto's disease. The titre of these antibodies indicates severity of the disease.

Treatment

Early detection and treatment are the prerequisite for a better outcome. A successful treatment plan involves adopting a collaborative approach combining the expertise of head & neck surgeons, endocrinologists and a nuclear physician⁴.

Current treatment options include both conventional as well as alternative clinical measures. The conventional medical treatments depend on medications and surgery to restore the hormone levels. While, alternative treatment approach involves diet supplements, herbal remedies, lifestyle changes and physical exercises to improve thyroid gland function or relieve discomfort associated with the problems.

⁴The term "nuclear physician" is a legitimate medical specialty. Doctors of nuclear medicine use a variety of radioactive substances to assist in the detection, diagnosis and treatment of health problems. Nuclear medicine is its own unique discipline with unique duties

- Treatment of hyperthyroidism involves suppression of thyroid hormone production that uses conventional medications.
- Treating hypothyroidism usually involves hormone replacement process with aid of conventional drugs that offer effective supplementation of hormone, which is the only treatment option for hypothyroidism and depending upon the cause of the disease, lifelong treatment routine is also prescribed.
- The best way to treat thyroid cancer is surgery, where initially the cancerous tissue is removed and if the condition still persists, then surgical removal of whole thyroid gland is done (which is known as thyroidectomy). In case of a large goiter as well, surgery may be recommended.
- Radioactive iodine is used to shrink a thyroid gland that has become enlarged or is producing too much hormone. It may be used in case of patients diagnosed with hyperthyroidism, a goiter, or some cases of cancer.
- Thyroid hormone pills are a common treatment for hypothyroidism, for patients with a goiter and for patients who have had thyroid surgery. The pills provide the body with the right amount of thyroid hormone.

Prevention

- Ask for a Thyroid Collar When X-Rayed
- Stop Smoking
- Too Much Soy Is NOT Healthy
- Detox
- Get enough iodine
- Avoid thyroid supplements

Conclusion

Even as problems associated with abnormal production of thyroid hormones continues to grow significantly, awareness about the disease in the country remains shockingly low. There is a significant need to reach out and make people aware of the causes, symptoms, treatment and importance of testing for thyroid problems.

The symptoms of the disease are often confused with other disorders, thus making thyroid one of the most under-diagnosed with no permanent cure disorders in India. However, with medication and proper treatment, thyroid can be controlled thereby helping patients to lead normal lives.

News bits

Exclusions no longer de rigueur at insurance companies

Source: *The Times of India*

"Exclusions" are the biggest complaint against insurance companies, when it comes to mediclaim policies. Policyholders always feel aggrieved that their policy under-delivers in terms of coverage. In recent months, however, with government initiatives and regulatory push, insurance companies have started becoming more inclusive in terms of coverage. From covering mental health to home nursing to Ayurvedic treatments to dental impaction, insurers are coming up with new products that promise to cover all. Under the Central government's Niramaya scheme, kids and adults with autism, Down's Syndrome, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities are covered. As per the 2011 census data, as many as 85.49 lakh people, including 29.92 lakh children, in India suffer from some form of mental disability.

Interview - Snoring

Dr. Srinivas Kishore Sistila, M.B.B.S, M.S. (ENT) (Star Hospital, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad)

How would you define snoring and what are its common causes?

Snoring is a sound generated by partial upper airway obstruction

What's the difference between snoring and apnea? Is snoring itself harmful or do you need to have sleep apnea to have adverse health effects?

Snoring is caused by partial airway obstruction whereas in apnea there is a complete airway obstruction. It is said that every patient having sleep apnea has snoring but the other way round may not be true always. Even simple snoring can lead to sleep apnea if not treated.

What are the risks associated with snoring?

Snoring gives rise to fatigue and excessive sleepiness in day time. People start dozing even while driving, which is dangerous. Sleep apnea is also associated with higher risks of silent heart attack and stroke during sleep.

Why do some people snore louder than others?

Loudness depends on amount of soft tissue vibration. People with bulky palate, larger tongue snore louder.

Are there any simple methods to try to stop (or reduce) snoring?

Simple snoring can be reduced by life style modifications like weight reduction, changing posture during sleep.

When should someone seek medical treatment for their snoring?

When there is apneic spells¹ during snoring, it is urgent to seek medical help. People who suffer from uncontrolled hypertension, diabetes must be treated for sleep Apnea.

Can lifestyle changes help overcome this problem?

Life style change can reduce the problem to some extent. But if there are anatomical factors causing airway obstruction that will definitely require medical help.

"Views expressed herein are purely personal and do not reflect the views of the Hospital"

¹ temporary suspension of breathing occurring during sleep



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News bits

No uniform medical coding a bottleneck for insurers

Source: *The Times of India*

Hospitals across India have their own billing systems. A large majority of hospitals, excepting corporate hospitals, don't have an IT department or digitised records. Even with the few, who send electronic medical records (EMR) for claims, the coding is not uniform, making claims settlement an arduous task. While the Union Ministry of Health and the IRDAI have strongly advocated for the increased usage of ICD-10, an international standard for medical coding; implementation is yet to take off. "The problem in India is we have a regulator for insurance and not for health. If hospitals across India implement ICD-10, the claims settlement process will be faster, cutting the turnaround time to half," said an IRDAI official. ICD-10, which allows for more than 14,000 codes for diseases, symptoms, abnormal findings, injury, has been implemented only by a few corporate hospital chains in India, despite being made mandatory by the Indian Medical Council for Research.

Health insurance for alternative treatments on the anvil

Source: *The Hindu Business Line*

Health insurance for alternative treatments like Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) is set to expand with the Centre taking steps to get insurers to develop packages for traditional treatments. A handful of Government and private health insurance companies have committed to the Government to draw up packages for AYUSH treatments. The companies said to be involved in the exercise include New India Assurance, National Insurance, Universal Sompo, Star Health Insurance, Max Bupa, Apollo Munich and Oriental Insurance. Sanjay Datta, ICICI Lombard's Chief (Underwriting-Claims and Reinsurance) agrees that clearer regulations will see insurers offer cashless services across AYUSH hospitals (currently insurers do not have them on their preferred provider network). This will further boost customer demand for AYUSH treatments, he adds.

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