

Practical Preventable Medicine



THYROID, EVOLUTION AND SEAWEED

The thyroid gland is a complex and powerful gland that is located in your neck and plays a key role in cell to cell communication, temperature regulation, hormone regulation, early embryonic cell migration and differentiation, hair growth and skin pigmentation, adrenal hormones production regulation, brain function and nerves, sexual development, regulation of sodium/potassium/calcium pumps in cells, adaptation to daily seasonal changes..... the list goes on and on. It is in short essential to health and is linked with the origin of invertebrates from the primordial soup that is the ocean.

Optimal functioning of the Thyroid is therefore essential for life, birth and all there is in between. There seems to be so much riding on this gland that there has recently been more attention paid to testing Thyroid function however I do think we can do more to prevent Thyroid issues by knowing how diet can assist in enabling it to do its very complex roles better. In Chinese Medicine it attributed to the functioning of the Heart, Spleen and Kidneys. More on that later, and it is the very balance of Yin and Yang. Thyroxine is the hormone produced by the body and levels are tested (along with Thyroid Stimulating Hormone) to assess it's functioning. Too much Thyroxine and you are too Yang; hot, hyperactive, heart palpitations, anxiety, weight loss, insomnia and tremors. Too low and you become too Yin with hair loss, dry skin, weight gain, depression, and tiredness.

To make Thyroxine you need two ingredients, Iodine found in seaweed mainly, and Tyrosine which is a protein found in beef, chicken and turkey, cheese (especially feta, ricotta and cottage) and eggs. Vegetable sources include Artichokes, Avocados, Beetroot, chickpeas and lentils...all of which are amongst my favourite foods as they make you feel good. And get this... from Tyrosine your body also makes the feel good neurotransmitter Dopamine (think happy heart) and noradrenaline that gives the rest and digestion calming neurotransmitter that switches off the 'fight flight' adrenaline response to stress.

Written by: Dr Angela Palmer - Kinglake Chinese Medicine
Chinese Medicine CMRBV REG AH/1347
Member AACMA 2154

Practical Preventable Medicine

So to keep a very complex thing simple, we absolutely need to eat seaweed and get good sources of protein to keep the delicate balance. Now there is a thing that Aussies don't eat much seaweed and indeed recoil from the thought. However, there are so many varieties and cooked well (think Japanese) it is fabulous. Or you could do what I do and hide it in common foods and add it to every soup/stew and even mash potato. Health food stores have a few varieties; I like Wakame Nori & Kombu. Seaweed also is effective in weight loss or management, circulation and dissolving lumps and bumps. And another thing.... thyroid function can also be depressed by excessive raw brassicas such as kale, broccoli or cabbage. This is only an issue if you eat whole broccoli's raw or juice entire bunches of kale. These vegetables are best eaten lightly cooked.

If you think you may have issues with your Thyroid, ask your G.P. for a test and ask your health professional to assess the levels, even if they are a little low or high it can affect us profoundly and make sure you have the above food in your families' diet.

Until next time, Stay well

Dr Angela Palmer

Chinese Medicine.

Written by: Dr Angela Palmer - Kinglake Chinese Medicine
Chinese Medicine CMRBV REG AH/1347
Member AACMA 2154