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## **IODINE DEFICIENCY**

by Raymond Francis

Do you get enough iodine in your diet? Every cell in the body uses iodine; it affects the production of all the body's hormones, and even has anticancer properties. Iodine deficiency contributes to increased infant mortality, chronic fatigue, fibrocystic diseases, infertility, impaired growth, impaired immunity, and autoimmune disorders such as Hashimoto's and Graves disease. Iodine deficiency also causes mental retardation and poor academic performance—even a mild deficiency has been reported to reduce IQ by 10 to 15 percent.

Since antiquity, iodine deficiency has been associated with thyroid problems such as goiter. After the thyroid, the breast is the second largest user of iodine. Studies show that iodine deficiency coupled with excess estrogen and exposure to environmental chemicals leads to cancer.

Given the importance of iodine to your health, are you getting enough? The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey has found that urinary iodine excretion in the U.S. dropped in half from the early '70s to the early '90s. The survey concluded that Americans are at risk for iodine deficiency. Since iodine is critical for thyroid function, this helps explain our growing epidemic of thyroid disease.

Dietary sources of iodine include salt-water fish, seaweed and iodized salt, with trace amounts found in grains, egg yolk and spinach. Deficiencies are occurring because many people are consuming less fish due to mercury contamination. In addition, soils have been depleted of iodine. People are consuming less salt, a good thing, but it also lowers iodine intake. Vegan or vegetarian diets are low in iodine. Diets high in baked goods, including bread, and/or sodas contain bromine compounds, which cause iodine deficiency. Drinking fluoridated water also contributes to iodine deficiency. Excessive fluoride, chloride and bromide chemically displace iodine and cause iodine deficiency. This is why adding fluoride to tap water has contributed to iodine deficiency and our epidemic of thyroid disease. Fluoride is also present in medications such as antidepressants, including Paxil and Prozac. Antidepressant drugs are known to promote cancer, and one mechanism may be their contribution to iodine deficiency.

Drinking and bathing in chlorinated tap water contribute to iodine deficiency. Using appropriate filters to remove the chlorine is highly recommended—approved filters are available at Beyond Health. Chlorine is even present in the sugar substitute Sucralose. Commercially-produced bread and baked goods contribute to iodine deficiency. The bromine compounds used by the baking industry, as dough conditioners, displace iodine in our tissues. Bromine is also used as an agricultural fumigant, and treated crops have elevated bromine levels. Bromine is also found in medications such as nasal sprays and inhalers. Some carbonated drinks, and even some Gatorade products, contain brominated vegetable oils. This is one more reason to eliminate processed foods from your diet.

Most Americans should have their iodine levels tested periodically, especially those with thyroid problems, cancer or any other problem known to be associated with iodine deficiency. Iodine measuring kits are available through Beyond Health.

The best way to measure iodine levels is with an iodine loading test. In this test, a measured amount of iodine is taken orally, and the amount of iodine excreted in the urine over the next 24 hours is measured. If your iodine levels are sufficient, the amount of iodine excreted will be about 90 percent. Less than 90 percent excretion indicates varying amounts of deficiency, which should most likely be supplemented.

Iodine supplementation not only provides needed iodine, it also increases the urinary excretion of undesirable fluoride and bromide. The RDA for iodine is 150 micrograms per day for adults. However,

recall that the RDAs are based on preventing obvious deficiency disease, such as goiter, and are lower than the amount needed for good health. Mainland Japanese get almost 100 times the RDA, which is one reason why they have significantly less disease than Americans. In fact, more than 90 percent of those suffering from Graves disease and Hashimoto's thyroiditis have a measurable iodine deficiency.

An iodine supplement should contain both iodine and iodide, as the body uses both forms. Although rare, some people are allergic to iodine and need to exercise care. Beyond Health's Bone Mineral formula contains supplemental iodine.

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