

What is National Thyroid Awareness Month?

During Thyroid Awareness Month, we help raise public awareness of thyroid disease in America. Thyroid disease is more common than diabetes or heart disease.

What is the thyroid?

The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland that sits low on the front of the neck, along the front of the windpipe. Brownish-red in color, the thyroid is rich with blood vessels. Nerves important for voice quality pass through the thyroid. When the thyroid is its normal size, you can't feel it.

The thyroid makes thyroid *hormones*, which are secreted into the blood and carried to every tissue in the body. Thyroid hormone helps the body use energy; stay warm; and keep the brain, heart, muscles, and other organs working as they should.

Impact of thyroid disease

More than 12 percent of Americans will develop a thyroid condition during their lifetime.

- An estimated 20 million Americans have some form of thyroid disease.
- Up to 60 percent of those with thyroid disease are unaware of their condition.
- Women are five to eight times more likely than men to have thyroid problems.
- Undiagnosed thyroid disease may put patients at risk for certain serious conditions, such as cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis, and infertility.

Apps for your smartphone

- [AllergyEatsMobile](#)
- [Enso: Meditation Timer and Bell](#)
- [Food Intolerances](#)
- [mySymptoms Food and Symptom Tracker](#)

Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Martin Hickey, MD**, NMHC's Chief Executive Officer.

Most thyroid diseases are lifelong conditions that can be managed with medical attention. Some thyroid conditions include:

- **Hypothyroidism:** A condition in which the thyroid gland does not produce enough thyroid hormone. Symptoms include extreme fatigue, depression, forgetfulness, and some weight gain.
- **Hyperthyroidism:** A condition that causes the gland to produce too much thyroid hormone. Symptoms include irritability, nervousness, muscle weakness, unexplained weight loss, sleep disturbances, vision problems, and eye irritation.
- **Graves' disease** is a type of hyperthyroidism. It is an autoimmune disorder. It is genetic and estimated to affect one percent of the U.S. population.

Some patients who have an **enlarged thyroid gland** may also produce too much or too little thyroid hormone. 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 thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) test. This is a simple blood test that measures whether your thyroid gland is functioning normally. 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.

Additional resources

- [American Thyroid Association](#)
- [WebMD](#)