

IODINE: The Forgotten Medicine

KEY WORDS

iodine, breast cancer, thyroid, goiter, hypothyroid

Before the introduction of the synthetic drugs that are used today, iodine was one of the most beneficial and universal medicines used by physicians around the world. Iodine was effective for everything: to heal wounds and disease; destroy bacteria, viruses, and pathogens; and to prevent cancer. Once one of the most commonly used medicines in the world, iodine was “forgotten” in favor of new pharmaceutical drugs.

Now we are seeing the consequences of forgetting this essential mineral – skyrocketing rates of cancer, an epidemic of thyroid dysfunction, and great difficulties with detoxification. Fortunately, not everyone has forgotten what this amazing mineral can do, and integrative medical practitioners are ushering in an era where iodine is making a comeback. It is a highly effective treatment with virtually no side effects – unlike modern drugs. I absolutely believe there are cases and times in which drugs are extremely important, and in fact, life saving. However, these drugs also come with long lists of side effects that often require *other drugs* to treat the problems they created in the first place! Today, drugs are used for every condition – even vitamin and mineral deficiencies. We are not deficient in drugs. We are deficient in vitamins and minerals, a healthy diet and a healthy lifestyle.

How You Have Been Robbed of Your Daily Iodine

In the 1920s, goiter (enlarged thyroid gland) was very common, especially in the Great Lakes region. To combat this problem, iodine was added to salt. While this did help reduce the incidence of goiter and thyroid problems, today many people are reducing the amount of iodized salt in their diets. Additionally, chlorine, fluoride and bromide, which lower iodine levels in the body by blocking iodine receptors, are increasingly consumed in foods or ingested

through environmental exposure. For example, chlorine is now used to purify water in place of iodine. Fluoride is found in toothpaste and water. Bromines replaced iodides in commercial baked goods in the 1980s. Not only are these elements toxic for the thyroid, they are dangerous for the rest of your body as well. Bromide, for example, can cause depression, headaches, hallucinations or even schizophrenia. Fluoride is also a toxic agent. It blocks the ability of the thyroid gland to concentrate iodine, and there are no studies showing that long-term fluoride intake has any beneficial effects. Dr. David Brownstein, an expert on iodine supplementation, writes that promoting fluoridated water as a way to prevent dental cavities is a “seriously flawed idea.” He found that his patients with breast cancer had higher than normal levels of fluoride in their bodies, while also being iodine deficient.

All of these factors combine to put your body greatly at need for much more iodine than it is getting.

We Need More Iodine

There is a growing consensus among scientists in America that we would have better thyroid function, a lower incidence of cancer and fibrocystic disease of the breast, and overall better health if we would consume more iodine. The established recommended *minimum* daily requirement for iodine is 150 mcg (micrograms).

People in the U.S. consume an average 240 mcg of iodine per day, which is slightly above the amount needed to prevent a deficiency syndrome (such as goiter). However, that *is not* the amount needed for beneficial health effects. People in Japan consume more than 12 mg of iodine (12,000 mcg), which is **50 times** more than the average American! Life expectancy in Japan is 82.12 years, the highest of all industrialized countries, while the United States is 78.11 years. The infant mortality rate in Japan is one of the lowest in the world, 2.79 deaths under age one per 1,000 live births, half the infant mortality rate in the United States. Finally, the number of deaths

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from breast cancer is almost three times higher in the U.S. than in Japan.

Iodine, the Thyroid, and Breast Diseases

Observational studies have noted that there is a connection between thyroid abnormalities and breast cancer. Today, **one in seven** American women will develop breast cancer during her lifetime. Thirty years ago, when iodine consumption was much higher than it is now, one in 20 women developed breast cancer. Women in Japan, consuming high amounts of dietary iodine, have much lower rates of breast cancer and thyroid problems. When these women emigrate from Japan to the United States and consume a Western diet (containing a fraction of the iodine consumed in Japan), their rates of breast cancer and thyroid diseases increase dramatically.

Iodine’s anti-cancer function may well prove to be iodine’s most important benefit. Exactly how it exerts these effects is still not fully understood. Laboratory tests using estrogen sensitive breast cancer cells exposed to iodine have shown that iodine makes them less likely to respond to the negative aspects of estrogen, and therefore, less likely to grow and spread.

Fibrocystic breast disease is marked by changes in breast tissue, and discomfort, swelling,

More...

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and breast tenderness. It is a very common concern for women. Supplemental iodine has been found to improve symptoms of fibrocystic breast disease. In fact, in one study, 98% of women receiving iodine treatment were pain-free by the study's end, and 72% had improvements in breast tissue. (Ghent WR, et al. Iodine replacement in fibrocystic disease of the breast. *Can J Surg* 1993;36:453-460.)

Supplemental Iodine Forms and Dosage

Different tissues in the body prefer iodine in different forms. Thyroid tissue best absorbs iodine as potassium iodide. Breast tissue, in contrast, takes up iodine when it is in the form of molecular iodine. Therefore, for optimal total body support, iodine supplements should contain more than one type of iodine.

According to Dr. David Brownstein, M.D., author and iodine expert who has treated thousands of patients in his clinic, states,

"As I started to use larger amounts of iodine (12.5-50 mg/day) to achieve whole body sufficiency, I began to see positive results in my patients. Goiters and nodules of the thyroid shrank, cysts on the ovaries became smaller and began to disappear, patients reported increased energy, and metabolism was increased as evidenced by my patients having new success in losing weight. Libido improved in both men and women. People suffering from brain fog reported a clearing of the foginess. Patients reported having vivid dreams and sleeping better. Most importantly, those with chronic illnesses that were having a difficult time improving began to notice many of their symptoms resolving."

The following conditions are routinely treated with iodine by Dr. Brownstein with effective results, few minor side effects and no toxicity: breast disease, diabetes, fatigue, infections, ovarian cysts, migraine headaches, fibrocystic breasts, thyroid disorders and vaginal infec-

tions. The most common side effects encountered with high levels of iodine are acne, metallic taste in the mouth, sneezing and increased saliva. These reactions are extremely rare, occurring in less than 5% of his patients.

If we all want optimal health, we must not allow iodine to be the forgotten medicinal mineral. It must be remembered and cherished for its amazing health and protective benefits. Remember iodine the next time you are considering what to include in your family's wellness plan! TM

Look for this formula at your local health food store. It combines 3 forms of iodine for broad spectrum effects in the body, as well as increased absorption:

Iodine (5 mg as molecular iodine, 5 mg as sodium iodide, and 2.5 mg as potassium iodide) 12.5 mg

TEST YOURSELF FOR IODINE DEFICIENCY:

The following is a list of symptoms that may be experienced by someone with low or deficient iodine levels. This is not a diagnostic test. It is meant as a nutritional guide to raise awareness of suboptimal iodine levels. It may also help you determine whether you should have further discussions with your healthcare practitioner for clinical testing.

Please read each descriptive symptom and check off any that describes how you feel.

SYMPTOM

- I'm sensitive to cold. My hands and feet are always cold.
- In the morning my face is puffy and my eyelids are swollen.
- I put weight on easily.
- I have dry skin.
- I have trouble getting up in the morning.
- I feel more tired at rest than when I'm active.
- I'm constipated.
- My joints are stiff in the morning.

- I feel like I'm living in slow motion.
- I have foggy brain.
- The outer 1/3 of my eyebrows is missing.
- My lips are swollen and protruding, particularly the lower lip.
- I have ringing in the ears.
- My hair is coarse and falls out, it is dry, brittle, and slow growing.
- My hair is dull and lusterless.
- I have frequency of urination.
- I have impaired hearing.
- I have reduced initiative.

- My calves are big.
- My legs and ankles are swollen in the morning.
- My buttocks and thighs are too well padded and when I look in the mirror, I'm pear shaped.
- I have high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- My heart is weak and I have a weak heartbeat.
- My stomach sags and is pushed forward by the curvature of my spine.
- My body temperature is below 97.8

TOTAL

You said Yes to **12 or more** symptoms: You would almost certainly benefit from iodine supplementation; check with your doctor to see if you have iodine or thyroid insufficiency.

You said Yes to **5 – 12** symptoms: You may want to consider testing and would be likely to benefit from iodine supplementation.

You said Yes to **0 – 5** symptoms: Although you have few symptoms you may want to consider taking iodine at a lower dosage for ongoing good health, disease prevention and detoxification.