

# Is your **Thyroid** making you



It's been said that the groundwork of all happiness is health. In an honest evaluation of your lifestyle, are you:

- Eating well?
- Exercising daily?
- Sleeping 7-8 hours each night?
- Visiting your local Spirit of Women physician for routine check-ups?

If you answered yes to most of these questions but still find yourself gaining weight, your thyroid may be to blame.

## WHAT IS THE THYROID?

The thyroid, a small, butterfly-shaped gland located inside the neck in front of the windpipe (trachea) and below your voice box (larynx), helps to regulate the breakdown of food in the body.

Working alongside the thyroid is the pituitary gland, located at the base of the brain, which produces thyroid-stimulating hormones (TSH). These hormones then travel through the bloodstream and instruct the thyroid to produce hormones as needed.

Thyroid hormones influence most of the organ systems in the body and regulate the production of heat and consumption of oxygen in the body.

SOURCE: [www.hormone.org/Thyroid/overview.cfm](http://www.hormone.org/Thyroid/overview.cfm)

Thyroid disorders don't have to control your life. Partner with your local Spirit of Women hospital to take back your health by choosing to make the necessary lifestyle changes today for a healthier tomorrow!

### WHAT ARE THYROID DISORDERS?

There are two types of thyroid disorders that can affect a person's weight. *Hyperthyroidism*, an autoimmune disorder, occurs when your body produces too much thyroid hormones, ultimately speeding up the metabolism and making it difficult to maintain a healthy weight. *Hypothyroidism*, an under-active thyroid, occurs when the body produces too little thyroid hormones, causing a slowdown of the metabolism and creating unwanted weight gain.

Thyroid disorders are generally considered to be more common in women than in men. A recent example is Oprah Winfrey, who endured a public battle with weight gain for years and was later diagnosed with hypothyroidism. Today, with the help of physicians, she is learning to control her condition by living a healthier lifestyle.

#### SOURCES:

[www.hormone.org](http://www.hormone.org)

[www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)

[www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

Need help finding a primary care physician or specialist? Call St. Luke's Physician Referral Service at 314-205-6060 for personal assistance finding one that meets your needs. Or search the online physician directory at [stlukes-stl.com](http://stlukes-stl.com).

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A THYROID DISORDER?

Like Oprah, it's important to recognize the signs & symptoms of a thyroid disorder and when it's time to discuss with your healthcare professional.

#### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS FOR *HYPERTHYROIDISM*

*\*Usually more common in older women*

- Sudden weight loss, even when your appetite and diet remain normal
- Rapid heartbeat (tachycardia) — commonly more than 100 beats a minute
- Irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia) or pounding of your heart (palpitations)
- Increased appetite
- Nervousness, anxiety and irritability
- Tremor — usually a fine trembling in your hands and fingers
- Sweating
- Changes in menstrual patterns
- Increased sensitivity to heat
- Changes in bowel patterns, especially more frequent bowel movements
- An enlarged thyroid gland (goiter), which may appear as a swelling at the base of your neck
- Fatigue, muscle weakness
- Difficulty sleeping

#### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS FOR *HYPOTHYROIDISM*

- Fatigue
- Sluggishness
- Increased sensitivity to cold
- Constipation
- Pale, dry skin
- Puffy face
- Hoarse voice
- Elevated blood cholesterol level
- Unexplained weight gain
- Muscle aches, tenderness and stiffness
- Joint pain, swelling or stiffness
- Muscle weakness
- Heavier than normal menstrual periods
- Brittle fingernails and hair
- Depression

