

September 2008: Thyroid Disorder AWARENESS

September 1 is **Gold Bow Day**, designed to raise the awareness of Thyroid Disorder. **One in 7** Australians will be diagnosed with some form of thyroid disease; while **women are five times more likely** than men to develop a thyroid condition.

Hypothyroidism is the *most common* thyroid disorder, and it is thought to affect around **six to ten per cent of women**. Thyroid disease, especially hypothyroidism (or an underactive thyroid) becomes **more common as we grow older**. Thyroid cancer in NSW has increased by 84% in women and 40% in men over the past 10 years.

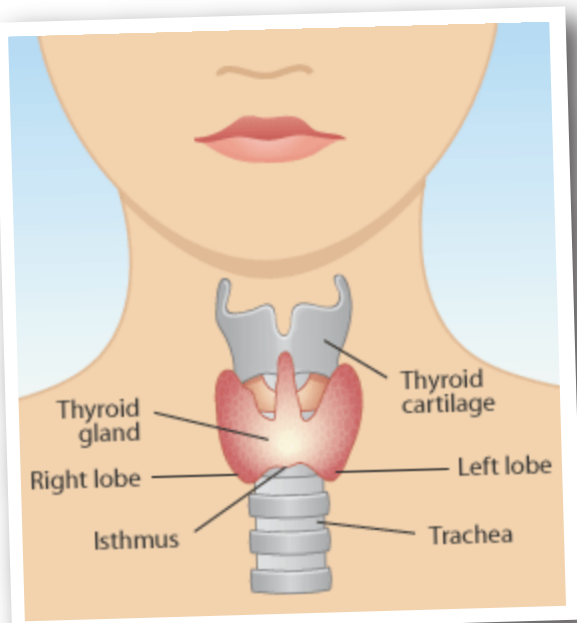
what is the thyroid gland?

The thyroid gland is a **soft, small, bow-shaped gland**, which is located in the neck below the voice box or larynx.

what does the thyroid gland do?

Your thyroid gland is a **critical part of your endocrine system**. Its purpose is to secrete thyroid hormones that:

- control the metabolic rate of almost all cells in the body.
- control the metabolism of fat and carbohydrates.
- boost protein synthesis.
- regulate heart rate and blood flow to organs.
- are important for energy production and oxygen consumption in cells.
- promote linear growth and brain development in children.
- are needed for normal reproductive function in adults.
- are important in bone and calcium metabolism.



what causes thyroid disease?

There are many possible causes of thyroid disease, these include:

- iodine deficiency.
- autoimmune disease.
- an imbalance in T4 production.
- nodules which have formed on the gland.
- benign and malignant (cancer) tumours of the thyroid.

Iodine deficiency is becoming an increasingly common cause of thyroid health problems in Australia. The main sources of iodine are marine seafood, dairy milk or dairy products and foods containing iodised salt. The recommended daily amounts of iodine for your diet are:

- AGE 0-7 YEARS: 90 µg (micrograms or millionths of a gram).
- AGE 7-12 YEARS: 120 µg.
- OLDER THAN 12 YEARS, adult males and females: 150 µg.
- PREGNANT AND LACTATING WOMEN: 250 µg.

You have a higher risk of developing thyroid disease if you:

- Have a family member with a thyroid problem.
- Have another pituitary or endocrine disease.
- Or a family member have another autoimmune disease.
- Have been diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.
- Have been diagnosed with Fibromyalgia.
- Are female.
- Are over 60.
- Have just had a baby.
- Are near menopause or menopausal.
- Are a smoker.
- Have been exposed to radiation.
- Have been treated with lithium.
- Eat too much soy foods.
- Have been exposed to certain chemicals (ie perchlorate, fluoride).

symptoms??

Symptoms of hypothyroidism (which can be related to low iodine levels or other forms of "underactive" thyroid disease) include:

- lethargy and tiredness, muscular weakness and constant fatigue.
- feeling cold (even on warm days).
- difficulty concentrating, slowed mental processes and poor memory.
- unusual weight gain.
- depression.
- thick puffy skin or puffiness of the face.
- hair loss.
- dry skin.
- constipation.
- weak slow heart beat.
- enlarged thyroid.