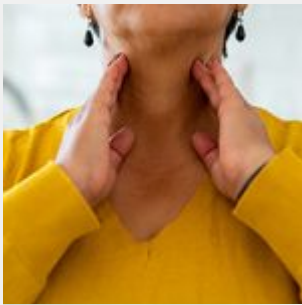


Ask Leyla: Is my struggle to lose weight on a new diet due to my hypothyroidism?



Q: I've been trying to lose weight on a low fat, low calorie, mostly plant-based diet—about 1200 calories a day—with little success. I feel I have to go this low because of my hypothyroidism. Why isn't it working?

A: One of the biggest mistakes people make is embarking on a very low-calorie diet for weight loss. Your daily calorie intake is unsustainable for the long term and since Mother Nature wants you to survive, your metabolism will be suppressed even further so that you stop losing weight. This adds insult to your already challenged thyroid. Moreover, the moment you break the diet and eat more than your allotted 1200 calories...viola! Weight gain.

We need to keep Nature guessing by *not* eating the same amount of calories every day. That means one day you'll consume 1800 calories, the next may be 2300, the day after that 1650, and so on. This way your body understands there is plenty of food around so your metabolic rate won't shift downward.

A very important macronutrient for a well-functioning thyroid is protein. If you're leaning toward vegetarianism or veganism with a mostly plant-based diet, you may not be getting enough essential amino acids as well as iron to support your thyroid.

Having an underactive thyroid requires you avoid goitrogens. The biggest culprits are soy and millet (a gluten-free grain). Goitrogens inhibit the uptake of iodine by your thyroid which is necessary for the production of thyroid hormones. Whether you need to supplement with iodine or not is determined by testing and the type of hypothyroidism you have. For example, iodine supplementation is contraindicated in Hashimoto's (autoimmune thyroiditis). However, having your iodine levels checked is still recommended to determine deficiency.

If you're taking thyroid replacement, check with your doctor or endocrinologist to see if your current doses need tweaking. Typically, a thyroid panel should be done twice a year to make sure your metabolism is purring along with the right dose of thyroid.

A qualified nutritionist can assess any nutrient deficiencies and develop an eating and supplement plan to support your thyroid and any other metabolic abnormalities that may be underlying your resistance to weight loss.

To your health!