

What is hyperthyroidism?

Hyperthyroidism develops when the body is exposed to excessive amounts of thyroid hormone. This disorder occurs in almost 1% of all Americans and affects women 5 to 10 times more often than men. In its mildest form, hyperthyroidism may not cause recognizable symptoms. More often, however, the symptoms are discomforting, disabling, or even life threatening.

Symptoms of hyperthyroidism may include:

- Fast heart rate, often more than 100 beats per minute
- Nervousness, anxiety, or an irritable and quarrelsome feeling
- Trembling hands
- Weight loss, despite eating the same amount or even more than usual
- Intolerance of warm temperatures and increased likelihood to perspire
- Loss of scalp hair
- Rapid growth of fingernails and tendency of fingernails to separate from the nail bed
- Muscle weakness, especially of the upper arms and thighs
- Loose and frequent bowel movements
- Thin and delicate skin
- Change in menstrual pattern
- Increased likelihood for miscarriage
- Prominent “stare” of the eyes
- Protrusion of the eyes, with or without double vision (in patients older than 60 years of age)
- Accelerated loss of calcium from bones, which increases the risk of osteoporosis and fractures