

# Healthy Hints: January 2017

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## Thyroid Awareness Month

### How important is your thyroid gland?

The thyroid gland produces thyroid hormone, which controls virtually every cell, tissue, and organ in the body.

The thyroid is the master gland of metabolism and energy.

The thyroid works like a car engine, setting the pace at which your body operates. If it is not working properly, then neither will you.

Hyperthyroidism occurs when the gland produces too much hormone causing the body systems to speed up. A person with too much thyroid hormone may have an elevated pulse, be anxious, nervous, or irritable and have trouble sleeping.

Hypothyroidism is caused by too little hormone which causes the body systems to slow down. Age is a risk factor. Women are five times more likely than men to have a gland which produces too little hormone. This can cause fatigue, weight gain, depression, dry skin and hair, and feeling cold all the time.

### How do you know if you have a thyroid problem?

Ask your doctor for a TSH (thyroid-stimulating hormone) test, a simple blood test to verify your gland's condition.

Perform a self neck check! You will need a handheld mirror and a glass of water. Hold the mirror focusing on the lower area of your neck just above the collar bones. Take a drink of water watching this area as you swallow. If you see any bulges or protrusions, see your physician. Your thyroid may be enlarged and need to be evaluated. Reminder, the thyroid gland is below the Adam's Apple closer in the lower part of your neck.

### Why schedule a thyroid evaluation?

Family history: If you have a parent, sibling, or child with thyroid disease.

Prescription medications: If you are taking Lithium or Amiodarone.

Radiation therapy: If you've had radiation therapy for tonsils, an enlarged thymus or for acne.

Untreated thyroid disease may lead to elevated cholesterol and then heart disease. Making sure that your thyroid is healthy is important to your overall well-being.

# Adopt New Habits Instead of Resolutions

**Aim to make small changes in 2017! By consistently making small changes that are hardly noticeable, you won't feel deprived or burdened and new habits will develop.**

## Ways to improve in the New Year:

Break down big goals into small and specific action plans.

Set small and specific daily or weekly goals.

Make sure your goals are realistic.

Your goals should be meaningful to *you*! You need to be internally motivated, not trying to do what someone else wants.

Remember to make one change at a time, and soon you will notice how easy it is to accomplish anything you desire.

Create a specific routine. Simply scheduling the time and place for an action triples the chances of that action taking place.

Stay consistent. The more consistent your habit, the easier it will be to stick to it. Place reminders to execute your habit each day.

Be positive! Try adding a healthy behavior that helps diminish an unhealthy one. For instance, take a walk at a time you might normally be watching TV and snacking on junk food.

For weight loss, try reducing your portions and eating more slowly. Replace sugary drinks with water.

Get a pet or a plant and notice the therapeutic affect of taking care of it.

Develop a support system. Human beings thrive when they feel supported. A support system is just as important for developing positive habits as it is in stopping bad ones.

Associate with role models. Spend more time with people who model the habits you want to mirror.

Get a buddy. Find someone who will go along with you and keep you motivated if you feel like quitting.

Forgive yourself if you backslide sometimes. Don't expect all your attempts to change habits to be successful immediately. Remember long term habit change occurs by making a change some of the time instead of all of the time.