

# It's not you: It's your thyroid.

Recognizing the symptoms of thyroid disorders



Our fast-paced, modern lifestyles mean we switch off less and less. Many of us feel that there are never enough hours in the day. We put up with feeling tired, having trouble sleeping or struggle with our weight. We blame this on ourselves and our lifestyle. But perhaps it's not you. Perhaps the culprit is a thyroid disorder, because the symptoms can be hard to spot and easily blamed on our hectic lives. Can you uncover the misconceptions about thyroid disorders?

Find out how much you know about thyroid disorders by taking this short quiz...

**Q1. Which one of these important body functions is the thyroid gland responsible for?**

*Please select one answer only*

- A. It controls the metabolism of the body
- B. It controls the sleep-wake cycle
- C. It controls the sensation of hearing
- D. It controls the eyes

**Q2. You bump into a friend you haven't seen for ages and are shocked by her appearance. Her hair is dry and brittle and her skin looks coarse and flaky. She also looks very pale. What do you think could be responsible for this change?**

*Please select one answer only*

- A. She's had some bad news and is not looking after herself properly
- B. She's been experimenting with heated styling aids too often
- C. She could be suffering from a lack of thyroid hormone (hypothyroidism)
- D. She's working too hard
- E. She's not eating properly
- F. She's not been getting enough fresh air
- G. It could be any of the above (A to F)

**Q3. You have a busy, stressful but exciting job with long hours. Which of the following issues do you believe are due to you and your lifestyle, rather than to a thyroid disorder? Please select as many as you feel are relevant**

- A. Irritability
- B. Comfort eating
- C. Increased sweating
- D. Drinking lots of coffee
- E. Palpitations
- F. Shaky hands
- G. Difficulty sleeping

**Q4. You often go to bed early to try and get plenty of sleep, but often find that you lie awake for ages thinking about the previous day, or wake up several times during the night. When your alarm goes off you feel tired and unrefreshed. What would you blame?**

*Please select one answer only*

- A. Your thyroid gland
- B. Yourself – you must learn to switch off from the pressures of everyday life
- C. Your bed
- D. Any of these could be to blame (A to C)

**Q5. Your best friend is trying desperately to slim down before her wedding but despite saying she's eating less and exercising more, she's not losing any weight and is becoming very frustrated. Why is she finding it so difficult? Please select one answer only**

- A. She hasn't got any willpower and is snacking on chocolate and crisps when nobody's looking
- B. She could have an underactive thyroid gland (hypothyroidism)
- C. She's not exercising regularly enough
- D. It could be any of the above reasons (A to C)

**Q6. Your sister has been trying for a baby for a long while with no success and is becoming despondent. What advice would you give her?**

*Please select one answer only*

- A. She should stop worrying and relax more
- B. Difficulty conceiving naturally is a problem for some people, she should just accept it
- C. She should see her doctor to check for problems with fertility

**Q7. You've noticed that your nails have become very brittle and are flaking. What's the culprit?**

*Please select one answer only*

- A. You could be suffering from lack of thyroid hormone
- B. You've been experimenting with different nail colors and effects too often and they've made your nails dry
- C. You've let your nails grow too long
- D. It could be any of the above (A to C)

**Q8. Your next-door neighbor has always been very sporty but he's told you he's recently had heart palpitations and feels sweaty. What could be causing this? Please select one answer only**

- A. He's been exercising too much and should stop and relax more
- B. He could be suffering from a condition such as hyperthyroidism and should see a doctor

**Q9. Why are thyroid disorders hard to recognize?**

*Please select one answer only*

- A. The symptoms are similar to those we associate with a busy 24/7 lifestyle
- B. They mimic the common cold
- C. They don't cause many symptoms
- D. They vary with the weather and time of year

# International Thyroid Awareness Week



As you will have seen, it can be very easy to blame our hectic lifestyles for many of the symptoms that could actually be caused by thyroid disorders.

Don't blame yourself or your lifestyle. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms it's important to see your doctor, as a simple blood test will confirm if you have a thyroid disorder.<sup>1</sup> If you would like to find out more about thyroid disorders, you can visit the ThyroidAware website: [www.thyroidaware.com](http://www.thyroidaware.com)

## Answers

### q1. A

The thyroid gland controls metabolism and its job is to produce thyroid hormones.<sup>2</sup> Thyroid hormone helps the body use energy, stay warm and keep the brain, heart, muscles, and other organs working normally.<sup>3</sup>

### q2. G

Your friend's appearance could be explained by many factors but few would suspect that brittle hair and dry, flaky skin with coarse patches and pallor could indicate a lack of thyroid hormone (hypothyroidism).<sup>4</sup>

### q3. B and D

Hyperthyroidism may cause increased sweating, palpitations, shaky hands and irritability.<sup>5,6</sup> Both hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism may cause difficulty sleeping.<sup>4,5</sup>

### q4. D

Any of these could be the cause of your sleepless nights, but did you know that insomnia is a symptom of both hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism?<sup>4,5</sup>

### q5. D

You may suspect that your friend isn't committed to her diet, but weight gain can be a symptom of hypothyroidism.<sup>4,7</sup>

### q6. C

She should see her doctor to identify any underlying issues. For example, did you know that fertility problems can be a sign of thyroid disorders and are associated with both hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism?<sup>4,5</sup>

### q7. D

You might be inclined to point the finger at poor nail care, but a lack of thyroid hormone can also cause brittle, flaking nails.<sup>4</sup>

### q8. B

It's important to take heart irregularities seriously and see a doctor. For example, palpitations can be a symptom of hyperthyroidism.<sup>5</sup>

### q9. A

Many of the symptoms of thyroid disease are similar to those we experience in our hectic modern lives, such as difficulty sleeping, anxiety, sweating, and weight gain.<sup>4,5</sup>

## References

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