



Fact Sheet

Tiny gland produces a powerful impact

A small butterfly-shaped gland in your neck impacts your energy level, how fast you burn calories, and how fast your heart beats. The thyroid is one of the glands in the endocrine system. It is about 2 inches long and weighs less than 1 ounce. It is located in the front of your neck below your voice box, and has a lobe on either side of your windpipe.

The thyroid gland works under the direction of the pituitary gland to secrete just the right amount of hormones to regulate your metabolism – how your body uses energy. It affects nearly every organ in your body, and impacts brain development, breathing, heart and nervous system functions, body temperature, muscle strength, skin dryness, menstrual cycles, weight, and cholesterol levels.

Thyroid disorders happen when something goes wrong in the process, and the gland secretes too much or not enough hormone. Too much hormone (hyperthyroidism) speeds up your body's functions and can cause symptoms like weight loss, sweating, rapid heart rate, and high blood pressure. Not enough hormone (hypothyroidism) slows down your body's functions, and can lead to symptoms like feeling tired, gaining weight, and not being able to tolerate cold temperatures. Other thyroid problems can include an enlarged or swollen thyroid gland, lumps in the thyroid, or thyroid cancer.

Your health care provider can run tests to help determine how well your thyroid gland is functioning. Thyroid disorders often run in a family, and are more common in women.

If you have a diagnosed thyroid disorder, it is important to manage your disease by taking any prescribed medicine as directed, eating a balanced diet, getting healthy amounts of sleep and physical activity, and getting regular check-ups from your health care provider.

To learn more about the thyroid gland, contact your health care provider.

The Phelps/Maries County Health Department – caring for your family, caring for our community, caring for YOU!



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