

THE HEALTH NUGGET



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IODINE

My interest in this subject began with my love for sushi. While traditional sushi can be made with raw fish, I enjoy it vegetarian style. I even make my own: rice smeared with a thin layer of Vegenaïse, then layers of avocado, cucumber, carrots, and Cha'i-Pow-Yu (a simple meat substitute) wrapped in seaweed. My mouth waters just thinking about it. Most people get turned off at the thought of sushi because they can't appreciate that it is made with seaweed—a weed from the sea.

Japanese consume the most seaweed of any population group. Several varieties are a staple in the Japanese diet. But nori, the seaweed used for sushi, is the most internationally used. In the Ariake Sea, 340,000 tons of nori are harvested a year, worth more than a billion U.S. dollars.

Seaweed draws from the ocean a wealth of mineral elements, one of which is iodine. Consequently, the Japanese have the highest levels of iodine in their diets of any population, and also the lowest incidence of cancer. The average American consumes approximately 240 micrograms of iodine a day. In contrast the average native Japanese takes in 12-14,000 micrograms, a 50-fold greater amount. In 1964, Japanese seaweed consumption was around 4.5 grams a day. Mainland Japanese are now reported to consume 14.5 grams of seaweed daily.

But while Japanese intake of iodine has increased, Americans has decreased. This could in part be due to less iodized salt use, soil depletion, chlorinated, fluoridated water (as chlorine and fluoride displace iodine in the body), and the elimination of iodine

from bread. Bread manufacturers replaced iodine as a dough conditioner with bromide, which actually competes with iodine for absorption into the thyroid and other body tissues.

Much of the iodine we swallow goes to the thyroid gland. The thyroid takes precedence with iodine absorption, as it requires iodine to produce hormones (T3 has 3 atoms of iodine, T4 has 4 atoms of iodine).

The visible symptom of iodine deficiency is goiter development. A goiter is simply an enlarged thyroid desperately trying to extract all the iodine it can from the blood. It came to be thought, no goiter, no problem with iodine deficiency. But just because goiters are not very common does not mean that Americans are consuming enough iodine. "The reigning truth on iodine is that the thyroid gland is the only organ in the body that requires this micronutrient, and a daily intake considerably more than what the thyroid gland needs is potentially harmful. The new truth is that the rest of the body also needs iodine, in milligram, not microgram amounts."¹

Iodine is detected in every organ and tissue in the body. It is found in high levels in the breast, brain, stomach, saliva, ovaries, liver, lung, heart, skin and adrenals. While the Recommended Daily Intake (RDI) of 150 micrograms of iodine a day for adults 18 and older will prevent goiters, it may not prevent breast disease. According to Dr. Donald Miller, "Prevention of breast disease requires higher doses of iodine."²

Japanese women have the highest iodine intake

of women anywhere in the world as well as the lowest incidence of breast cancer. "Breast cancer is associated with low thyroid states."³

Breast cancer has also been associated with what we have called fibrocystic breast disease, now termed benign breast changes. Approximately 30 percent of American women have fibrocystic breast disease. Lumpiness and pain are the typical symptoms. Jonathan Wright, MD states, "If you take the right amount of iodine your fibrocystic disease will go away no matter how bad it is."⁴ "Bottom line," he says, "fibrocystic breast disease goes away, every time, with application of iodine."⁵ Dr. Jorge D. Flechas, MD, MPH, states that he has seen "the regression of cysts, nodules, scar tissue, and painful breast with the use of 50 mg of Iodoral® (a high potency iodine/potassium iodide supplement) per day for 2-3 years. The breast pain goes away in just a few weeks, but the cyst/cysts, scar tissue and breast nodules take up to 2 to 3 years to resolve. On mammograms I have seen a 50 to 80 percent reduction in the scar tissue present in the breast."⁶ He suggests that before starting on iodine therapy a patient should have their thyroid hormone values investigated.

Apparently several human organs that need iodine cannot absorb it until blood iodine levels reach high values. One of these organs is the stomach. It has been observed that as we age stomach acidity decreases with health deterring consequences. Acidity is needed to digest and absorb vitamin B12, kill harmful bacteria, prevent heart burn, reflux, etc. Iodine promotes stomach acidity.

Iodine deficiency has been connected to ovarian cysts and ovarian cancer. Iodine treatment has been used to heal ovarian cysts.

Iodine has been related to cataract formation and glaucoma, and is seen as useful in treating eye infections.

Over 30 years ago two ophthalmologists observed that a combination tablet called Iodo-niacin (120

milligrams of iodide, 15 milligrams of niacin) taken for several months could actually reverse atherosclerotic clogging of arteries. They proved this effect by taking pictures of clogged arteries in the backs of the eyes before and after treatment.⁷

Iodine deficiency can result in a 10-15 point decline in IQ. It is the single greatest preventable cause of mental retardation.

Dr. Jonathan Wright has successfully used 10 to 15 drops of an iodine solution in water or juice every 3 to 4 hours (while awake) to treat bladder infections. It has also been used in clearing up acne.

Iodine is an antiseptic. It kills bacteria, algae, fungi, viruses and protozoa. It is an anticancer agent. It detoxifies biological toxins such as snake venom, protects against autoimmunity. By replenishing iodine the body begins excreting fluorine, bromine and chlorine previously bound to iodine receptor sites. Heavy metals like lead and mercury become more effectively eliminated because thyroid and other hormones become more functional.

Not very much iodine is needed, yet it is one of the most deficient minerals in our bodies. A small micronutrient ends up being of great consequence for so many different aspects of our health. As it is in nutrition, so it is in life. The Bible reminds us of this. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9). "How great a matter a little fire kindles" (James 3:5). It is the little things that make up much of life's happiness. It is the seemingly little attentions and little efforts that have life-changing effects.

Professional help and thyroid monitoring is advised when supplementing with iodine. Or you can try sushi.

1 Miller Jr. MD, Donald. "Iodine for Health." August 14, 2006. <http://www.lewrockwell.com/miller/miller20.html>.

2 Ibid.

3 Hall MD, Prudence. "Breast Cancer." <http://www.thehallcenter.com/learn/articles/breastcancer.php>.

4 Somers, Suzanne. *Breakthrough*, p. 38.

5 Ibid., p. 40.

6 Flechas, M.D., MP, By Jorge D. "Iodine and Other Nutrients Play a Crucial Role" Vitamin Research Products. <http://www.vrp.com/articles.aspx?ProdID=1959>.

7 Wright, M.D., Jonathan. "One Mineral Can Help a Myriad of Conditions from Atherosclerosis to "COPD to Zits." <http://www.tahoma-clinic.com/iodide.shtml>.

