Iodine: This Vital Mineral Treats Breast Cancer Successfully

Naturally occurring iodine is a rare trace element that was discovered in the 1800's by a French chemist. It was found to be effective in the treatment of goiter (swelling of the thyroid gland), and in 1924 the United States initiated its use as an additive to common table salt to address the high incidence of iodine deficiency. As a result, the once-common condition of goiter in the U.S. was virtually eliminated.

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It is highly accepted that iodized salt is sufficient to meet the body's requirements. Although this assertion has been taught in medical schools for several decades, many studies counter that claim. Furthermore, researchers have found that the iodine in salt has poor bioavailability, meaning that the body does not fully absorb the dosage.

Recommended Daily Allowance

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The U.S. RDA of iodine is 150 micrograms (mcg) for adults, while 220 mcg and 290 mcg are recommended for pregnant and lactating women, respectively. These quantities were established to effectively prevent goiter but do not provide for the body's other needs for optimal thyroid, endocrine or immune system function, nor are they sufficient dosages for the prevention of cancer.

Iodized salt hasn't eliminated iodine deficiency disorders in the U.S. Recent studies by the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey indicate low levels in more than 50% of the population (accounting for all demographic categories including ethnicity, region, economic status, race, and population density).

Adequate iodine levels are crucial for all aspects of health and well-being; in fact, in generations past, physicians routinely used iodine in medical practice. The typical dose was 1 gram of potassium iodide (KI), containing 770 mg of iodine, which far exceeds the current U.S. RDA of 150 mcg.

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Dr. Albert S. Gyorgi (1893–1986), the physician who discovered vitamin C, wrote: “When I was a medical student, iodine in the form of KI was the universal medicine. Nobody knew what it did, but it did something and did something good. We students used to sum up the situation in this little rhyme:

If ye don’t know where, what, and why
Prescribe ye then K and I.”

Iodine’s Role in the Body

Principally known for its job in proper metabolism and thyroid function, iodine is also necessary for a healthy immune system and has many therapeutic benefits including antibacterial, antiparasitic, antiviral and anticancer properties.

The thyroid is the body’s main storage site for iodine. The mineral is also concentrated in the glandular system, including the body’s sweat glands. The ovaries, breasts, prostate and the brain contain high concentrations of iodine, and virtually every cell in the body is dependant on this important element. When a deficiency exists, the thyroid competes with other storage sites and all become depleted. An unmet deficit puts one at risk for a variety of conditions and illnesses, including cancer.

Iodine is also essential for children’s growth and development, and a deficiency in pregnant women is the primary cause of preventable mental retardation and brain damage, as disclosed by the World Health Organization.

Hypothyroidism and Its Symptoms

David Brownstein, M.D. explains in his book *Iodine, Why You Need It, Why You Can’t Live Without It* how the thyroid requires iodine to produce its hormones and to regulate the body’s

metabolism. Hypothyroidism is indicated by a low metabolic rate. Some of the many symptoms that indicate a hypothyroid state include: brittle nails, cold hands and feet, dry skin, elevated cholesterol, fatigue, inability to concentrate, infertility, menstrual irregularities, muscle cramps and weakness, poor memory, puffy eyes, and weight gain. Hypothyroidism is common in an iodine deficient state and Brownstein has found that proper iodine supplementation often results in curing or improving the hypothyroid condition.

Iodine As An Anti-Cancer Nutrient

The natural life cycle of normal cells includes growth, division and ultimate death. Apoptosis is a necessary and natural process that refers to the programmed death of our body's cells. The spent cells are continually replaced by new cells as the normal cycle perpetuates. Apoptosis keeps cell division in check to ensure their normal life cycle and eventual death; however, abnormal cancer cells do not undergo this process and their uncontrolled growth eventually overwhelms and damages the body.

The research and clinical experience of Brownstein and his colleagues maintains that iodine is an anticancer nutrient that promotes apoptosis when taken in doses far exceeding the RDA, and that chronic deficiencies and the body's inability to properly utilize iodine set the stage for cancers of hormone-sensitive tissues and glands, such as the breasts, ovaries, uterus and prostate.

Causes of Iodine Deficieny

Worldwide, we are experiencing epidemic proportions of iodine deficiency, in part due to deforestation, soil erosion, and poor farming practices that deplete minerals from the soil and yield iodine-deficient crops. There are other contributing factors that exacerbate this disturbing global problem.

Exposure to toxic chemicals hinders the uptake of iodine in the body as the toxins compete for iodine receptor sites and inhibit the body's ability to absorb this valuable mineral. These toxins include a group of elements known as halides (and their derivatives), all of which have similar chemical structures. The halides consist of bromide, fluoride, chloride and iodide, the latter being the only one with therapeutic effects in the body.

In the 1980s, bromine (a bromide derivative) replaced iodine as a bread dough ingredient. Bromine is a known breast carcinogen. This singular change by the food industry resulted in an epidemic of bromide toxicity and increases in thyroid disorders, thyroid cancer and other illnesses resulting from iodine deficiency. Bromine is also used in crop fumigation, pest control, in some carbonated drinks and several prescription medications.

Exposure to chlorine (the oxidized form of chloride), as well as fluoride found in toothpaste, the water supply and many pharmaceutical drugs, further compound the deficiency dilemma as these toxins compete with iodine for absorption by bodily tissue. Sufficient iodine saturation in bodily tissues prevents the binding of halides and allows for their elimination from the body.

Iodine Sources

The body does not produce iodine and it is often difficult to get adequate levels from food; however, the ocean is an abundant source. Sea vegetables (sea weed) are a concentrated source of iodine, and although fish contain this mineral, most also have high levels of mercury. Soil around oceans typically has sufficient iodine levels while inland and mountainous areas contain little or none. Sea vegetables, animals that graze near coastal areas, organic crops grown in iodine-rich soil (although soil content varies, even in organic crops), animal products that have had iodine added to feed, iodized salt, and supplements are among the best known sources of iodine.

A toxic body is unable to absorb and utilize enough iodine from diet alone, and a deficiency usually requires supplementation. When the deficit is resolved, the body will gradually displace the toxic halides from tissues throughout the body, especially the thyroid and other major storage sites. Iodine's detoxifying effect also strengthens the immune system and helps balance hormones.

Testing for Iodine Levels

The pioneering work and research of physicians Guy Abraham, M.D. (former professor of medicine at UCLA); David Brownstein, M.D. (author and Director of the Center for Holistic Medicine in W. Bloomfield, MI); and Jorge Flechas, M.D. (Director of Flechas Family Practice in Hendersonville, N.C.), confirms the body's critical need for iodine in levels far above the RDA. Brownstein has tested for iodine sufficiency in more than 4,000 patients and found 96% to be deficient. Flechas has had similar results in lab tests of more that 21,000 cases worldwide.

Guy Abraham, M.D. and his colleagues Brownstein and Flechas have developed a reliable method of measuring iodine levels that requires a two-part test: the urinary spot test and the urine loading test. The former requires a urine sample to establish a baseline of iodine saturation in the body. This is followed by supplementation with 50 mg of an iodine/iodide combination and subsequent 24-hour collection of urine. These samples are then sent to a lab for analysis, see (www.optimax.com) for the laboratories used for testing.

This detection method is based on the concept that the more iodine-deficient the body is, the more it will retain after supplementation, and the less will be excreted in urine. If the body has sufficient iodine levels, it will excrete 90% or more of the supplemented dose. Conversely, less than 90% in the urine (more than 5 mg retained) indicates a deficiency.

Supplementing With Iodine

The iodine specialists have found that the combination of iodine and iodide is more effective than just one form because of the different concentrations throughout the body. For instance, the breasts and prostate predominantly utilize iodine, whereas the thyroid gland and skin require iodide. Other bodily tissues concentrate either form.

Working with a health care practitioner or arranging phone consultations with the testing lab is necessary to interpret the test results and to determine the proper iodine dosage, as well as what companion nutrients may be required for optimum absorption and binding of the supplement.

Adequate supplementation treats many conditions, including ADD, breast, ovarian and prostate diseases (including cancer), thyroid disorders, vaginal infections, infertility, sebaceous cysts,

migraine headaches and many others. Obtaining the proper iodine dosage is critical, as too much is also problematic.

It's useful to consider that the mainland Japanese ingest nearly 14 mg of iodine daily (mostly from seaweed) –- almost 100 times more than the U.S. RDA. These are large amounts by U.S. standards, yet the Japanese have extremely low rates of fibrocystic breast disease, as well as breast, endometrial, ovarian and prostrate cancers. Brownstein has found that effective doses vary between 12 and 50 mg per day for most adults.

Iodine supplementation, when necessary, not only addresses many serious health challenges, it's also useful in health maintenance and disease prevention. Since iodine is one of the body's most essential minerals, testing for its levels should not be overlooked by anyone trying to achieve or maintain optimum health.

Sources:

1. Brownstein, M.D., David: *Iodine: Why You Need It, Why You Can't Live Without It*, 3rd Edition, West Bloomfield, MI: Medical Alternative Press, 2008

2. International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders, (www.iccidd.org)

3. (www.optimox.com)

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