

# Thyroid and Pregnancy: What Every Woman Should Know

Did you know that a properly functioning thyroid is critical for a safe pregnancy? Abnormal thyroid function before, during, and after pregnancy is associated with numerous problems for mother and baby. Here is what you should know:

## What is the thyroid?

- **A butterfly-shaped gland** located in the lower front of your neck.<sup>1</sup>



- **It produces thyroid hormones**, which regulate body functions such as:<sup>1</sup>
  - breathing and heart rate
  - body temperature
  - body weight

## How does thyroid disease affect women during pregnancy?

- Thyroid disease is the **second most common hormone disorder** found in pregnancy.<sup>1</sup>
- Untreated thyroid diseases can cause **infertility, miscarriage, preeclampsia**, and **post-partum thyroid disease**.
- The thyroid hormone is critical to the **development of a baby's brain and nervous system**.<sup>2</sup>
- If a pregnant woman's thyroid is not functioning properly, her infant could be born with **low birth weight** and defects such as **congestive heart failure**.



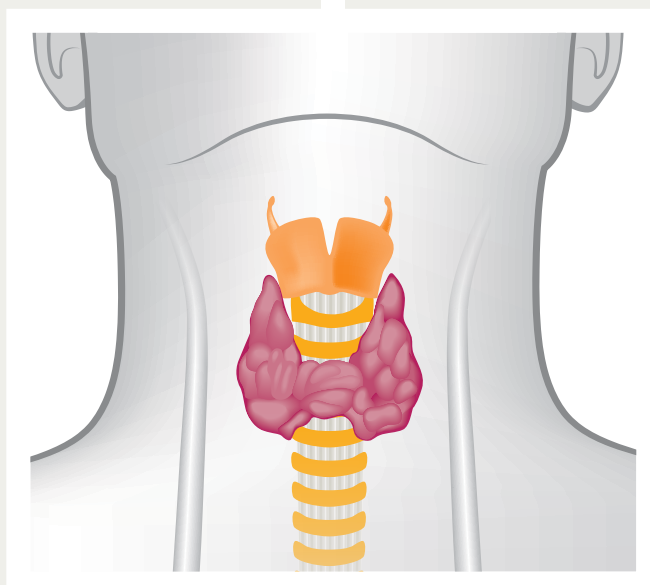
## What to look out for: Hyperthyroidism and Hypothyroidism<sup>2</sup>

The two most common thyroid disorders are hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism, when your thyroid is either overactive or underactive.

### Hyperthyroidism

**1 in 500** pregnancies

- Occurs in one of every 500 pregnancies.<sup>3</sup>
- Symptoms include rapid and irregular heartbeat, a slight tremor, unexplained weight loss and severe nausea and vomiting.
- Uncontrolled, it can lead to congestive heart failure, preeclampsia, miscarriage, premature birth, and low birth weight.



### Hypothyroidism

**3–5 in 1,000** pregnancies

- Occurs in three to five out of every 1,000 pregnancies.<sup>3</sup>
- Symptoms include extreme fatigue, cold intolerance, muscle cramps, constipation, and memory or concentration issues.
- Uncontrolled hypothyroidism during pregnancy can lead to preeclampsia, anemia, miscarriage, low birth weight and stillbirth.

#### References:

1. <http://usa.healthcare.siemens.com/clinical-specialties/womens-health-information/laboratorydiagnostics/thyroid-disease/thyroid-disease-and-pregnancy>
2. [http://www.thyroid.org/wp-content/uploads/patients/brochures/Thyroid\\_Disease\\_Pregnancy\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.thyroid.org/wp-content/uploads/patients/brochures/Thyroid_Disease_Pregnancy_brochure.pdf)
3. <http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/endocrine/pregnancy-and-thyroiddisease/Pages/fact-sheet.aspx#pregnancy>

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## How can you get tested?

Thyroid problems may be difficult to detect during pregnancy because symptoms mimic other symptoms common during pregnancy. It is important to be aware of signs and symptoms and consult with your doctor to protect your health and your baby's health.

Thyroid problems during pregnancy can be tested through diagnostic blood tests. For mothers diagnosed with thyroid disease, proper treatment and monitoring can prevent pregnancy complications.

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