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Iodine, The Rest of the Story

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In a number of past newsletters, three articles have extolled the value of iodine supplementation. A review of the older research as well as newer research has revealed that iodine deficiency is widespread and may be responsible for many underlying conditions including cancers of the breast and ovary, thyroid disorders, chronic fatigue, and fibromyalgia.

Appropriate testing for iodine deficiency was reviewed. The most accurate test to measure iodine levels is the iodine loading test. This was covered in the November 2005 Vitamin Research News. After taking 50 mg of an iodine/iodide combination, 24 hours of urine is collected. The amount of iodine excreted is measured. When there is iodine deficiency present, little iodine will be excreted during the testing. When there is sufficient body iodine levels present, larger amounts of iodine will be excreted.

I have been involved in the iodine project for approximately four years. During this time, I have tested iodine levels (with my partners) in over 4,000 patients. My results have been consistent: over 95 percent of patients have tested low for iodine.

The iodine loading test has proved useful to gauge the body iodine levels. The first question to come to mind if one tests low for iodine is, "Shouldn't I just take iodine?"

The best results with iodine, as with all nutritional supplements, can be achieved as part of a comprehensive holistic program. As I describe in my book, *Iodine: Why You Need It, Why You Can't Live Without It* 2nd Edition, adding magnesium and vitamin C will enhance the effects of iodine. This is particularly true for individuals experiencing a number of factors related to iodine. This article will cover four major factors sometimes associated with iodine supplementation and how vitamin C and magnesium can support individuals with these concerns:

1. Allergy
2. Autoimmune thyroid disorders
3. Detoxification Reactions
4. Iodism

Iodine allergy

In my experience, an allergy to inorganic, non-radioactive iodine is very rare. An allergy to radioactive iodine dye, commonly used in many medical procedures, does not guarantee an allergy to inorganic iodine/iodide such as Iodoral®. If an allergy is shown to iodine, do not continue to take it until you seek medical care.

Autoimmune Thyroid Disorders

Some physicians feel that iodine supplementation causes autoimmune thyroid disorders. They also claim that those with autoimmune thyroid disorders should not take iodine as it will exacerbate their condition. Before conventional medicine began using radioactive iodine to treat autoimmune thyroid disorders, large doses of iodine was the treatment of choice in treating autoimmune thyroid disorders. There are numerous reports in the literature, some dating back well over 100 years, showing the benefits of using iodine in excess of the RDA to treat autoimmune thyroid illnesses.¹⁻⁴

If iodine was the cause of autoimmune thyroid illnesses, these illnesses should have been decreasing over the last 30 years. The opposite has occurred. In the United States, iodine levels have fallen approximately 50 percent over the last 30 years while, at the same time, autoimmune thyroid disorders have been rapidly increasing.⁵

My clinical experience has shown that in an iodine deficient state, higher doses of iodine, as part of a holistic treatment program, are an effective and safe way to treat autoimmune thyroid illness without appreciable side effects.

Detoxification Reactions

Iodine can cause a detoxification reaction in the body by facilitating the body's release of the toxic halides fluoride and bromide. If the body's detoxification pathways are overloaded when the toxic halides are being released, a detoxification reaction can be triggered. A detoxification reaction can take the form of fatigue, muscle aches, fever, diarrhea, and brain fog, skin rashes, etc.

Though a detoxification reaction to iodine usage is rare, it has happened. A detoxification reaction can be minimized with using nutritional support (vitamins and minerals), balancing the hormonal system, getting the body's pH balanced, eating healthy foods, and other holistic treatments. This will be discussed more at the end of this article.

Iodism

Iodism occurs when the dose of iodine is too high and results in a metallic taste in the mouth, increased salivation, sneezing, headache, and acne. Also, sinus headache, especially headache in the frontal area, and a sense of fever may be present. Iodism occurs in a small minority of patients and is easily rectified by adjusting the dosage of iodine used.

Synergistic Supplements

As with using any nutritional supplement, a comprehensive holistic treatment plan provides the best results. Magnesium is an important part of the iodine treatment plan. Magnesium deficiency is very common. Magnesium is nature's relaxing agent. Magnesium levels (via red blood cell magnesium levels) should be assessed and supplementation instituted. Magnesium supplementation will likely ensure optimal results with iodine.

Vitamin C is also an integral nutrient in the iodine treatment plan. I reported a case study showing how the use of Vitamin C along with iodine helped to improve and possibly repair the transport mechanism for iodine in a patient with Graves' disease.⁶ As with magnesium, it is best to use Vitamin C before beginning iodine supplementation.

My experience has also shown that proper mineral support also aids iodine supplementation. Testing for mineral deficiencies and correcting these deficiencies before instituting iodine supplementation leads to the best results. I frequently have my patients measure their pH levels. If an acidic condition is present, correcting the pH imbalance before beginning iodine therapy is the correct way to go. How do you correct a pH imbalance? Eating whole foods, eliminating refined foods, beginning mineral supplementation including magnesium can all help the situation. Iodine itself is also an alkalinizing agent for the body.

Summary

If one is found to be iodine deficient, it is best to correct other nutrient imbalances before instituting iodine supplementation. Proper dosing of magnesium, Vitamin C and minerals will maximize the response to iodine. Before beginning any nutritional program, the best results can be achieved when working with a health care practitioner skilled in the use of natural agents.

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