



# The Beacon

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## Med-Cert Medical Management Resources

*“Guiding your way to better health management”*

### Thyroid Problems

#### What Are Thyroid Problems?

Through the hormones it produces, the thyroid gland influences almost all of the metabolic processes in your body. Thyroid disorders can range from a small, harmless goiter (enlarged gland) that needs no treatment to life-threatening cancer. The most common thyroid problems involve abnormal production of thyroid hormones. Too much thyroid hormone results in a condition known as hyperthyroidism. Insufficient hormone production leads to hypothyroidism.

#### What Causes Thyroid Problems?

All types of hyperthyroidism are due to an overproduction of thyroid hormones, but the condition can occur in several ways:

- **Graves' disease:** The production of too much thyroid hormone.
- **Toxic adenomas:** Nodules develop in the thyroid gland and begin to secrete thyroid hormones, upsetting the body's chemical balance; some goiters may contain several of these nodules.
- **Subacute thyroiditis:** Inflammation of the thyroid that causes the gland to "leak" excess hormones, resulting in temporary hyperthyroidism that generally lasts a few weeks but may persist for months.

- **Pituitary gland malfunctions or cancerous growths in the thyroid gland:** Although rare, hyperthyroidism can also develop from these causes.
- **Hypothyroidism,** by contrast, stems from an underproduction of thyroid hormones. Since your body's energy production requires certain amounts of thyroid hormones, a drop in hormone production leads to lower energy levels. Causes of hypothyroidism include:
  - **Hashimoto's thyroiditis:** In this autoimmune disorder, the body attacks thyroid tissue. The tissue eventually dies and stops producing hormones.
  - **Removal of the thyroid gland:** The thyroid may have been surgically removed or chemically destroyed.
  - **Exposure to excessive amounts of iodide:** Cold and sinus medicines, the heart medicine amiodarone, or certain contrast dyes given before some X-rays may expose you to too much iodine. You may be at greater risk for developing hypothyroidism if you have had thyroid problems in the past.
  - **Lithium:** This drug has also been implicated as a cause of hypothyroidism.

Untreated for long periods of time, hypothyroidism can bring on a myxedema coma, a rare but potentially fatal condition that requires immediate hormone injections.

**Hypothyroidism poses a special danger to newborns and infants.** A lack of thyroid hormones in the system at an early age can lead to the development of cretinism (mental retardation) and dwarfism (stunted growth). Most infants now have their thyroid levels checked routinely soon after birth. If they are hypothyroid, treatment begins immediately. Hypothyroidism can be due to these causes:

- A pituitary disorder
- A defective thyroid
- Lack of the gland entirely

A hypothyroid infant is unusually inactive and quiet, has a poor appetite, and sleeps for excessively long periods of time.

**Cancer of the thyroid gland** is quite rare and occurs in less than 10% of thyroid nodules. You might have one or more thyroid nodules for several years before they are determined to be cancerous.

#### *Med-Cert provides:*

*Utilization Management, Maternity Management, Large Case and Wellness Disease Management, Transplant Coordination and Stop Loss Assessments*

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[www.medcertinc.com](http://www.medcertinc.com)

## The Secret Power of Naps

To combat fatigue and stay on top of things at work and at home, many people have made power naps a regular part of their routine.

### Naps and Sleep Deprivation

Daytime naps can be one way to treat sleep deprivation, says Sara C. Mednick, PhD, sleep expert and author of *Take a Nap! Change Your Life*. "You can get incredible benefits from 15 to 20 minutes of napping," she says. "You reset the system and get a burst of alertness and increased motor performance. That's what most people really need to stave off sleepiness and get an energy boost."

The length of your nap and the type of sleep you get help determine the brain-boosting benefits. The 20-minute power nap -- sometimes called the stage 2 nap -- is good for alertness and motor learning skills like typing and playing the piano. Slow-wave sleep -- napping for approximately 30 to 60 minutes -- is good for decision-making skills, such as memorizing vocabulary or recalling directions. Getting rapid eye movement or REM sleep, usually 60 to 90 minutes of napping, plays a key role in making new connections in the brain and solving creative problems.

### Naps Versus Coffee

Is taking a catnap better than reaching for a cup of java? Yes, Mednick says, because caffeine can decrease memory performance. So you may feel more wired, but you are also prone to making more mistakes.

### Napping Tips

Research has found that napping regularly may reduce stress and even decrease your risk of heart disease. To get the most out of a power snooze, follow these quick tips from Mednick:

*Be consistent.* Keep a regular nap schedule. Prime napping time falls in

the middle of the day, between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

*Make it quick.* Set your cell phone alarm for 30 minutes or less if you don't want to wake up groggy.

*Go dark.* Nap in a dark room or wear an eye mask. Blocking out light helps you fall asleep faster.

*Stay warm.* Stash a blanket nearby to put over you because your body temperature drops while you snooze.

## DON'T FORGET TO PRECERTIFY

**Med-Cert's Toll-free Precert Telephone Number is (800)-356-7126 and should be reflected on your health insurance ID cards.**

It is ultimately the responsibility of the employee/participant/member to make sure precertification has been done. Many plans will reduce your benefit amount if you fail to precertify.

Group Health Plans vary from one employer to the next so it is important for you to know what your health plan requires. Call the customer service representative for your health plan if you have questions.

Below is a list of some of the common Standard Precertification Notification Requirements.

- *Inpatient Hospital Stays*
- *Inpatient Treatment for Mental and Emotional Conditions or Substance Abuse*
- *Inpatient Rehabilitation Therapy*
- *Skilled Nursing Care*
- *Outpatient Stays over 12 hours*
- *Outpatient Surgeries*
- *Physical Therapy after first 6 visits*
- *Speech Therapy after first 6 visits*
- *Home Health Care*
- *Hospice Care*
- *Maternity – on confirmation of pregnancy (or at least 2 months prior to delivery) and again on admission for delivery*
- *Outpatient Procedures – refer to your Employee Benefit Plan booklet as some plans require precertification for outpatient procedures*

## Did you know??

Eyes are the only part of the human body that functions at 100 percent ability at any movement...

## Recipe Corner

### Cheesy Broccoli Soup



### Ingredients

- 3 ½ pounds broccoli, washed and drained (about 4 bunches)
- 1/2 cup chopped green onion
- 2 teaspoons butter
- 2 - 14 ounce cans fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 4 cups 1% milk
- 3 cups shredded reduced-fat Swiss cheese

### Directions

1. Cut broccoli into small pieces, discarding any overly thick bottom stems.
2. Boil broccoli in a medium saucepan until just tender to retain nutrients. Immediately rinse with cold water, drain, and refrigerate.
3. In a large saucepan, saute green onions for about two minutes in butter or until tender.
4. Stir in chicken broth and slowly add flour, stirring constantly to prevent lumps. Bring to a slow boil on medium high heat, reduce heat to medium, and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Add broccoli pieces to the broth and puree mixture in an electric blender or food processor until smooth.
6. Return soup to saucepan over low heat. Blend in milk and Swiss cheese and simmer gently until cheese melts but not until milk boils.
7. Add nutmeg, grated pepper, or grated cheddar cheese to taste.



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