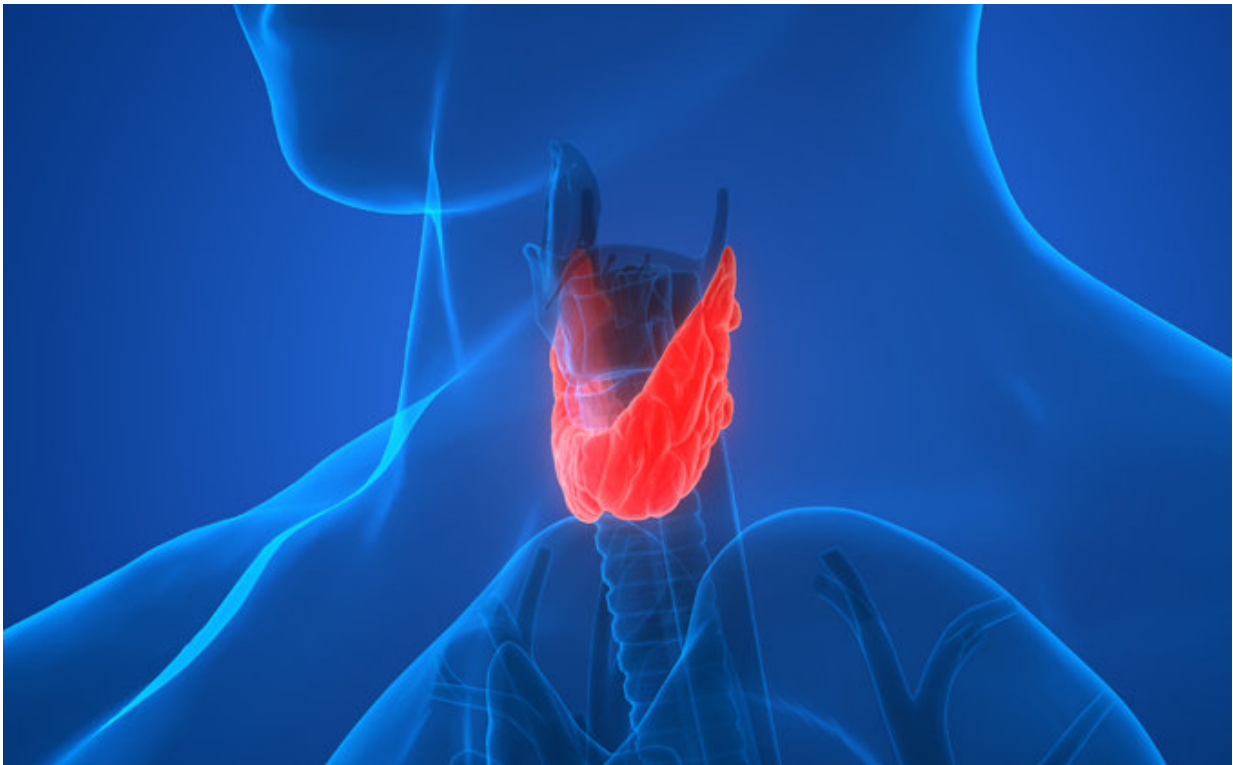


# Hyperthyroidism vs. hypothyroidism—what's the difference?

January 22 2018, by Joshua Darden

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Credit: Loyola University Health System

In our daily life, we may sometimes feel run down, stressed or have unexpected weight fluctuations and think it is nothing out of the ordinary. Yet for some people, these symptoms could be a sign of an underactive or overactive thyroid.

In recognition of National Thyroid Awareness month, Loyola Medicine endocrinologist Pauline Camacho, MD, FACE, Immediate Past President of the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, offers the following information about thyroid health.

The thyroid is a butterfly shaped organ that resides in your neck and secretes hormones that help regulate heart, brain, muscles and other organs functions. Think of it as a control center for your body. If something is off in the body, the thyroid can overcompensate or underperform causing effects on the metabolism.

"If your thyroid is overactive, it can cause your metabolism to work overtime and the condition is known as [hyperthyroidism](#)," said Dr. Camacho. "The opposite is known as [hypothyroidism](#), when your metabolism slows down."

Symptoms of hyperthyroidism include but aren't limited to increased appetite, sudden weight loss, anxiety, difficulty sleeping, thinning hair, thinning skin, sensitivity to heat and bulging eyes.

Hypothyroidism symptoms include weight gain, being lethargic, dry skin, muscle weakness and depression.

For patients experiencing these symptoms, Dr. Camacho suggests talking with your [primary care physician](#), who will decide whether thyroid hormone blood test is needed.

Hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism treatments vary. Hyperthyroidism may be treated with medications that slow down the production of thyroid hormone. Other treatments include radioactive therapy and surgery.

Hypothyroidism is typically treated with medication and working with

your doctor to find the proper dosage.

"There's often a family history when it comes to [thyroid](#) conditions," Dr. Camacho said. "With autoimmune diseases, there's a genetic predisposition that may give us advance warning of the possibility of disease."

Thyroid conditions affect both men and women but for women, the rates of hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism are almost 40 percent higher.

Once a diagnosis is made, many patients experience overall improvements to their health.

"Hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism are treatable and the goal is for patients to see a significant change in their quality of life," said Dr. Camacho. "By raising awareness, we can provide knowledge of these conditions and knowing is half the battle."

**More information:** For more information on thyroid awareness month, visit [thyroidawareness.com](http://thyroidawareness.com)

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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