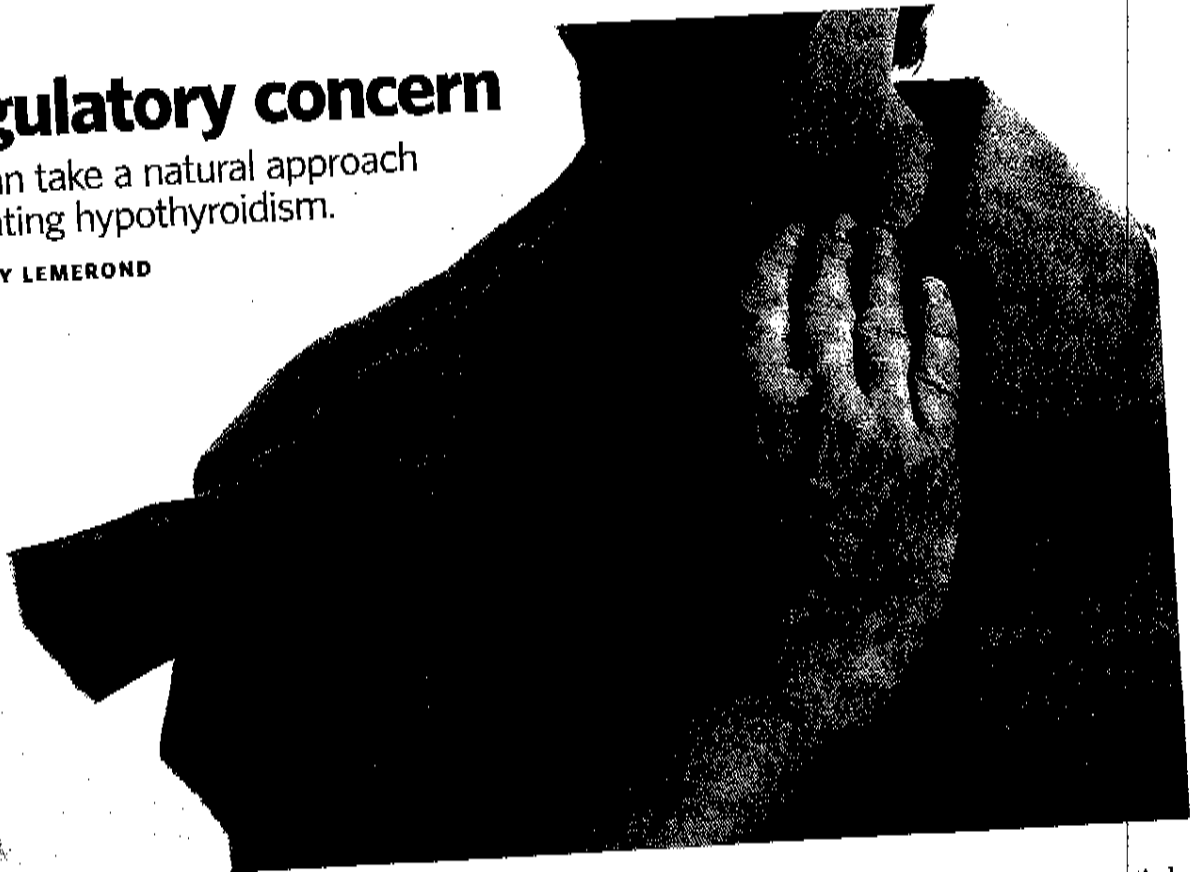


Regulatory concern

You can take a natural approach to treating hypothyroidism.

BY TERRY LEMEROND



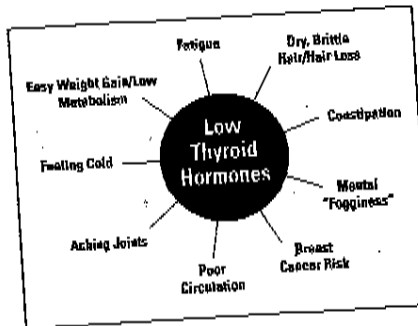
THINKSTOCK

THYROID PROBLEMS ARE ON THE RISE, YET THEY ARE OFTEN misdiagnosed and undertreated. People may be told they are out of shape, depressed, or are erroneously diagnosed with chronic fatigue, when actually it's a sluggish thyroid that's the root of the problem.

There are many types of thyroid disease, including goiter, hyperthyroidism, thyroid nodules, thyroid cancer, and Hashimoto's thyroiditis, but the one most commonly seen is hypothyroidism (including suboptimal thyroid function).

Official statistics indicate the prevalence of hypothyroidism is about 5 percent of the population, but this is a conservative estimate and undiagnosed thyroid issues affect many times that number. *For example:* Some integrative practitioners report that more than 50 percent of their postmenopausal female patients have suboptimal thyroid function, and the number for men increases with age as

well. Patients with low thyroid hormone levels can experience a frustrating constellation of symptoms (see chart).^{1,2}



Lack of iodine

The most effective way to stimulate thyroid function is to use iodine at clinical doses. Iodine was once a common medicine, but dietary iodine intake in many areas has remained low. It wasn't until after World War I that medical professionals advocated for iodine enrichment in the diet.

Most people think that iodine is adequately supplied by enriched table salt. But many have cut back on their

salt intake or are eliminating it entirely. Compounding the issue is the nature of processed foods. Most food manufacturers don't use iodized salt, and their products — especially frozen pizzas, appetizers, and processed meats — are laden with unhealthy types of sodium instead.

Additionally, chlorine, fluoride, and bromide — which lower iodine levels in the body by blocking iodine receptors — are increasingly encountered from foods or through environmental exposure.

Chlorine is mainly used to purify water. It is also used to bleach paper, so using white coffee filters and tea bags releases a small amount of this compound into hot beverages. Additionally, chlorine is used in laundry, swimming pools, and hot tubs. Fluoride is found in toothpaste and drinking water, as well as in certain dental treatments. And bromines began to replace iodine in commercial baked goods more than 30