



HOPE

C A T S
CUMBRIA ADVISORY THYROID SERVICE
BUMPER SUMMER

Newsletter 2016

Long may C.A.T.S. continue to give hope to Thyroid patients everywhere

Hello Everyone

Hello friends, C.A.T.S. send a warm welcome out to all our members, friends and supporters. It has taken me ages but, at last our 2016 Summer Bumper edition is finished and ready for you to read. We hope you will all enjoy reading our newsletter, and find something of interest inside. If you see any articles in any magazines that relate to Thyroid issues, please let me know as we are always looking for new information and ideas to fill our newsletters. We want our newsletters to have input from our members so if you would like to share your ideas and experiences please get in touch with me at the office. We hope that everyone is keeping well and looking forward to the sunny weather. There's no doubt about it a little bit of sunshine does make you feel better. The holiday season is nearly here, so to all our members that are going away, we hope you have a nice relaxing break. Over the last few weeks the C.A.T.S. office has been very busy with lots of e-mails, letters and phone calls so we have lots of subjects and news to talk about.

Thyroid Friends.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support us by being a Thyroid Friend. Our membership database is growing however we always welcome new members, so if you know anyone who would like to join us just contact me at the C.A.T.S. office using one of the contact methods listed at the back of your newsletter. Membership subscriptions are one of our main sources of income. Our membership costs £6-00 for 12 months. This covers 4 newsletters, access to our helpline, invitations to our meetings and special events, plus information and advice from our Thyroid advisory team.

Gold Stars *

On our current membership database, the total stands at 136, however we always welcome new members so if you know anyone who would like to join us please just tell them to give me a ring at the office. ** Don't forget to look out for the gold star form in your newsletter this is to remind you that your membership is now due. Members who get their newsletters by e-mail will receive a separate reminder in the post.

Public Meetings and Events

Our International Thyroid Awareness stall at the Forum 28 was held on Wednesday 25th May we did not have many people come to our stall but those that did come were able to receive lots of information and advice on Thyroid related issues.

Don't worry if you were unable to attend as we have arranged another 3 events for this summer. First we have an informal coffee and a chat meeting on Wednesday 6th of July at the Forum 28 in Barrow (from 7pm to 8:45pm.) As we do not have a guest speaker during the evening Gill and I will also conduct a short question and answers session. This will give patients the chance to ask those questions that your GP does not have time to answer. If you can't attend this event or prefer to have your questions answered privately don't hesitate to contact me at the office so I can answer any queries you have.

The next event on our calendar is in the foyer at Booths Supermarket in Penrith on Wednesday, August 10th (from 11am to 2pm.) The event will be aimed at raising awareness of Thyroid health conditions in the community so we will have lots of Thyroid information for you to take away with you. We also feel this event will give Gill and myself the chance to say hello to all our new members who joined us from the former TFNC group.

Our last event of the summer will be another Thyroid awareness event. This time at the Westmoreland Shopping Centre in Kendal on Wednesday, 24th August (from 11am to 2pm.) We hope you can come along to these events to support the work we do. Our events are open to everyone so if you know anyone who wants to know more about this complex health condition tell them to come along. In this area as many as 1 out of 4 people may have a Thyroid condition, sadly many of these patients will struggle to get diagnosed, and consequently suffer many years of not feeling well so it's vital we spread the word.

C.A.T.S. help the Queen celebrate her 90th birthday

It was a surprise phone call from the office of the Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria that started a chain of events leading to C.A.T.S. being invited to attend the Queens 90th Birthday Lunch Celebrations in the Mall on June 12th. The Queen supports many charities and voluntary groups but for our group to be selected (only 4 groups were selected from Cumbria) to attend such a memorable event is indeed a great honour. Thank you to all concerned for giving C.A.T.S. this wonderful opportunity. We will give an updated report of our grand day out in our next newsletter.

Heart Disease risk

Ladies are protected from heart disease with our female hormones however once we reach the menopause we are just as much at risk as men. Thyroid patients who are normally underactive have poor circulation, higher cholesterol levels than normal, weight gain, and high blood pressure. Patients who are overactive also have blood pressure problems along with raised cholesterol levels, irregular pulse rates and high levels of stress hormones. All of these problems can predispose you to develop heart disease. So if you are a lady who has gone through the menopause or there is a history of heart problems in your family, please get checked out as the sooner you find out if you are at risk the easier it will be to treat you. The good news is that heart disease need not be a killer with today's advances in medicines heart disease is treatable.

****** Please note that ladies do not always experience the classic signs of heart disease. Breathlessness, Indigestion, Rib cage pain, Pain in your back, or pain in the side of your neck going up towards your head can all indicate you have a heart problem, so if any of these symptoms happens to you please go to your doctor straight away.

Blood tests results

The latest blood tests ranges for the South Cumbria area are as follows
Your TSH reading should be between 0.34 to 5.6
Your T4 reading should be between 8 to 18
These figures are for a balanced Thyroid but there are many reasons for figures outside these ranges. For information on blood tests please give me a ring.

Dementia and your Thyroid

The subject of dementia has been highlighted in the media during these last few weeks so I thought I would look at this subject and the links there is with Thyroid dysfunction. Having a Thyroid problem often means our memory is not as good as it should be, we often get confused and muddled, and can't remember what we were going to do. Many people jokingly call this Thyroid brain in the same way that ladies who are pregnant often say they have baby brain, however many patients worry that this is the start of Alzheimer's or Dementia. In most cases there is no need to worry as this is just a natural part of getting older.

However, it is most important to make sure your Thyroid is balanced as any drop in the levels of Thyroid hormones will increase your memory loss and cause extra confusion. It is also important that you keep your brain as active as possible by doing crossword or Sudoku puzzles, reading, knitting, sewing or anything that makes you concentrate. Joining a singing group is also a good idea. It is a simple idea but it seems to work, patients just sit in a circle and have a right good sing-song just like we used to do years ago. There are also special groups that have been set up in many communities that specialise in improving age related memory problems joining one of these groups is very beneficial as everyone has the same problem and can help to support each other.

Research shows that the more active you are the more your memory will improve. Eating a good balanced diet also helps, don't forget what you eat nourishes your whole body (that includes your brain) so if your diet is poor your brain will probably be lacking in essential nutrients.

Research has shown the herbal remedy Ginko Biloba can aid memory loss however you need to talk to your GP before taking this remedy as it does react against quite a few medications so you must make sure it is safe for you to take. Patients who have heart and circulation problems have an extra risk of developing Dementia type problems. These patients need to keep their blood pressure in the normal range and cholesterol levels as low as possible. If you are worried about your memory pop along to your GP and ask if they will check out your symptoms just to be on the safe side.

Natural Desiccated Thyroid Extract (NDT)

In the last few weeks this subject has cropped up several times so I thought I would explain a little bit about NDT. Many of our members will not have heard of NDT but from the early 1900's up until the late 1950's this extract was recognized as the recommended treatment for an underactive Thyroid. The extract is made from pig's liver so is considered to be more natural compared with the synthetic Thyroxine that we all take now. However, during the 1950's scientists found out that some of the batches of NDT varied in strength. Around this time the synthetic Thyroxine was being developed and so the NHS, the government and all the drugs regulatory boards decided to stop the using NDT and use the newer synthetic Thyroxine instead.

Some time later doctors noticed that many patients were not as well as they should be when taking the newer T4 drug. However, it took quite a long time before the reason for this became obvious. The T4 we take needs to be converted to T3 and patients were simply not converting the synthetic T4 into T3. (T3 helps control our moods, our energy levels, how quickly we gain weight, and many more functions in our bodies.) Scientists then set about making a synthetic form of T3. Unfortunately, the cost of this new synthetic T3 was much higher than the T4 everyone was taking. This resulted in the NHS ruling that in order for patients to be prescribed T3 they had to be referred to an endocrinologist.

As we all know it is not common practice for underactive patients to be referred to endocrinologists. Many other countries prescribe T3 as routine, and also prescribe NDT as a treatment for HypoThyroidism but it is a different story in this country, so this results in some patients not feeling well despite being on the maximum dose of Thyroxine.

Eventually the government did relax their rules and allowed GP's to prescribe T3, even then C.A.T.S. were still receiving phone calls from patients who did not experience a good quality of life. I have just been told that the rules have changed again and now you can only get T3 when prescribed by a consultant. (If you are already taking T3 and your Thyroid is well balanced you will probably be allowed to stay on your medication) but a newly diagnosed underactive patient who is not well when taking the maximum safe dose of T4, will now struggle to get T3 prescribed to them.

CONT

With the development of the internet T3 and NDT has become easily available from countries that continue to prescribe these treatments. However, the worry about this is that you really need to be sure that the company you order from is a reputable one, as there are many bogus firms on the internet. There have been several reports in the media recently of patients taking medication they had bought from the internet and then becoming very ill. Another concern is the dose of NDT that patients may have to work out for themselves, and the dosage is worked out different to the way Thyroxine is worked out. Also as the NHS do not recognize NDT as a treatment for Thyroid patients, people who do risk taking NDT and then becoming ill and may subsequently find their GP not as sympathetic as they would be when using the traditional treatments. As a support group that works within the NHS guidelines we cannot recommend the use of NDT unless it is prescribed by a registered NHS doctor (there are just a few NHS doctors who support the use of NDT but most will not.)

Lumps and bumps

For many patients to suddenly feel a lump or bump in their neck is very frightening, however in most cases it turns out that there is nothing to worry about as most lumps in the neck are benign. Thyroid Adenoma is a harmless swelling of a clump of Thyroid cells. Cysts and Goitre's are usually benign but in rare cases can be cancerous. Thyroid cancer is very rare and can be treated very successfully. In many cases if surgery is recommended only a small section of the Thyroid gland is removed. All lumps and bumps though should be investigated. The first thing to check is the Thyroid levels as something as simple as an imbalance in your levels can cause goitres or cysts to form. If your levels are balanced, then further tests need to be done. X-Rays, scans, and a fine needle aspiration are usually carried out, then depending on these results doctors will then see what the next stage will be.

Going on Holiday

If you are going abroad for your holiday don't forget Thyroxine needs to be stored in a cool place (below 25c) and must be kept in the original packing otherwise this could lead to problems at customs. Thyroid patients often have very dry thin skin which is easily damaged, so don't forget your high factor sun cream and some skin moisturizers.

Also don't forget to tell your insurance company that you have a Thyroid condition. If you are travelling to an EU country and require emergency treatment it is free providing you have a EHIC card (European Health Insurance Card.) These are free and to obtain one go to

<http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/1073.aspx?CategoryID=70&SubCategoryID=172> and follow the links. If you are unlucky to need any treatment don't forget to tell all medical staff who treat you that you have a Thyroid condition as certain drugs administered in emergency conditions can cause an imbalance your Thyroid.

Taking Thyroxine

Patients who take Thyroxine should ideally take their pills first thing in the morning on an empty stomach, with a big glass of water. You should wait half an hour before having your breakfast and taking any other medication. These are the guidelines set out by the NHS. However, there are some medications that should have a gap of at least 4 hours between them and your Thyroxine. These medications include Iron supplements, Calcium supplements, Ulcer healing drugs, some Antibiotics, Antacids, some Anti-Depressants and also Statins. Some patients get around this problem by taking Thyroxine as usual then waiting until lunch time before taking any other medication. If you need any advice on this subject, please contact me.

While working on the internet the other day I came across this piece of writing so I thought I would share it. I do hope you like it

The Train of life

At birth we board the train and meet our parents, and we believe they will always travel by our side. As time goes by other people board the train, and they will be significant in our lives. – eg siblings, friends, children and even the love of your life. However, at some station our parents will step down from the train, leaving us to continue this journey alone. Others will step down over time leaving a permanent vacuum. Some however will go so unnoticed, that we don't realize they have vacated their seats. The train ride will be full of joy, hope, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hello's, goodbyes and farewells. Success consists of having a good relationship with all passengers, requiring that we always give the best of ourselves. The mystery is that we do not know at which station we ourselves will have to step down. So we must in the best way possible, love, forgive, and offer the very best of who we are. It is important to do this because when the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty, we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who continue to travel on the train of life.

Wishing you all a joyful journey

John McDonald

Vitamin D3 Supplements

This vitamin has received much publicity recently, because doctors are now finding out the important role that it has in the overall well being of patients (especially Thyroid patients). Vitamin D is nick-named the sunshine vitamin because our bodies make a small amount of this vitamin when we are outside in the sunshine. In order for this process to happen the UV index needs to be greater than 3. In the UK this only happens in spring and summer. However, as we all know in the UK many summers consist of...rain! Don't despair, Vitamin D can also be obtained from oily fish, cod liver oil capsules, animal liver, fortified margarine, butter and fortified milk. Vitamin D helps to maintain the balance between production and breakdown of bone. It also helps in the role of brain health and also cardiovascular health. Research shows it also boosts the immune cells that fight infection and cancer. Doctors recommend most patients can benefit from taking this supplement, but as usual please check with your GP first.

Depression and your Thyroid

There is a well established link between anxiety, depression and Thyroid dysfunction. In fact a spell of depression or anxiety is often the first sign that your Thyroid is not balanced. Fortunately, mental health issues are now being highlighted so patients can receive the help they need. This is welcoming news as many patients have had to spend years of not being well and not being able to cope with life, hiding away because they were too afraid to say how they felt.

research shows that as many as 1 in 4 people will experience mental health issues at some time in their lives, but the sad fact for a lot of patients is that they will have more than one episode of anxiety or depression to cope with in their lives. Whilst most patients will learn coping strategies to enable them to deal with the problem more specific help such as Counselling, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), Person-Centred Therapy (PCT), Psychotherapy and Hypnotherapy can all help you think more clearly and get your life back on track. Other treatments that could help are therapies such as reflexology, aromatherapy, back and neck massage (as this relaxes the body and helps release tension), Reiki healing (which can help to rebalance your body) and acupuncture. as we all know your Thyroid gland controls every part of your body including your moods. Some of the T4 that we take each day is converted in the body to T3 (we have already mentioned T3 in our article on NDT.)

This T3 is responsible for controlling the levels of the feel good hormone Serotonin. So if your Thyroid hormone levels are on the low side, your T3 and Serotonin will probably also be low resulting in low moods, anxious feelings, panic attacks and eventually anxiety and depression. Your T4 levels only needs to be a little bit low for you to experience these feelings.

C.A.T.S. recommend that all Thyroid patients have regular blood tests. Many GP's only run blood tests once a year, usually around your birthday. C.A.T.S. suggest that if you start to feel a bit low, or start to get panic attacks, or even a panicky feeling this is a warning that you need to talk to a doctor as soon as possible. There are many different treatments for mental health problems and sometimes you need to try one or two different ones before you find the right one for you. Some types of medication take a few weeks to take effect, but are very good once they do start to work.

Over 60's and Thyroid problems

Many of our members will have been diagnosed with Thyroid problems around the time of the menopause or some following the birth of a child. However, it is quite common for patients in the 60 years and over group to suddenly find their Thyroid gland is mal-functioning. Most doctor's practices do run health screening tests for older patients. However, as we all know sometimes patients do slip through the net, so if you know an older neighbour, friend or relative who does not seem well, why not suggest to them that they get their Thyroid checked.

Hyperthyroid (over-active) is quite common in this age group. In many cases the activity is border-line so will just need monitoring carefully. Sometimes the levels are raised above the safe limits so treatment must be given. Carbimazole is usually the first choice of drug used however some patients may have complex medical conditions so carbimazole is not suitable and radio-iodine treatment will be used instead. Most of these patients will eventually need treatment for hypothyroidism.

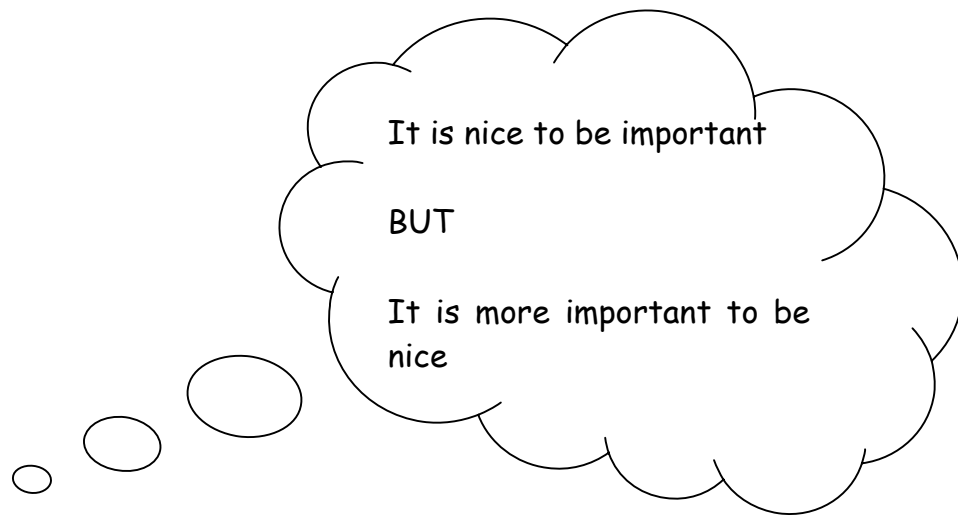
Hypothyroid (under-active) is usually more difficult to detect in older patients as symptoms mimic the ageing process and also many other health conditions. Again some of these patients will have border-line blood tests levels, so careful monitoring is all that is needed. If treatment is required, it is usual to start Thyroxine on the lowest dose (25 micro-grams) to see how the patient reacts to the medication. If there are no obvious side effects, the dose will be increased until the TSH come into the normal range.

Thyroid nodules are also quite common in this age group. Usually after investigation, in most cases, they are found not to be a health risk and can be safely left alone. However, in just a very small number of cases they are found to have suspicious cells. Surgery is an option in these cases but if the patient has complex health issues, surgery may not be possible so then the patients will just be monitored to work out what the best treatment should be.

Internet Warning

The internet is a wonderful tool for seeking information about many subjects. However please make sure that the site is genuine and all information is correct before acting on the advice.

Passing Thoughts



That's all for now folk's

Once again we have come to the end of our newsletter. We hope you have all enjoyed reading this bumper issue and have found some helpful information inside. People often say they always learn something new when they come to our meetings. We would like that to be the same with our newsletters. Gill and I are also looking forward to seeing everyone at our events. However, if you cannot attend the events you can still access Thyroid information and advice via our website. Just log on to www.cumbriancats.co.uk. Our website is constantly being updated so you should find lots of useful information on there. If you want to contact me with any questions you can do so using one of the methods below: email moyramm@yahoo.co.uk or moyra@cumbriancats.co.uk telephone 01229 869705

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Postage Cost

One of the biggest cost for running C.A.T.S. is our postal costs, so if you would like to help us save money, why not sign up to have your newsletter by email. To sign up just contact Peter at richjon51@talktalk.net. You can return to paper copies at any time, so why not give it a try and see how easy it is.

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Facebook Page

We recently introduced a Facebook page to our services. This is proving very popular among our members. Once our website is fully updated you will be able to share your experiences, post questions, receive C.A.T.S. news, updates and much more. If you haven't visited the page yet, why not take a look now www.facebook.com/pagesCumbria-Advisory-Thyroid-Service-C.A.T.S./1387475768249218. Please like and share our page to spread the word about Thyroid disease.

We will be back again in September with our mini late summer news update but until then enjoy the summer sunshine, keep well and keep happy.

Best Wishes,

Moyra

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Please note that all information supplied to CATS will be treated with the strictest of confidence and will not be passed on to any other source.

ALL CATS VOLUNTEERS WORK TO STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY
RULES AT ALL TIMES

Any information produced in this newsletter is to help those suffering with thyroid disease. Whilst every effort is made to provide accurate information, it is impossible to ensure that the information given is relevant to every individual. No responsibility is accepted by C.A.T.S. and it is recommended and essential that if in any doubt about your condition that you should always contact your doctor, specialist physician or surgeon to seek medical advice.

C.A.T.S recommends that you ALWAYS seek your Doctor's advice



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