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World Thyroid Day 2026: India's Hidden Endocrine Burden

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World Thyroid Day 2026: India's Hidden Endocrine Burden

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WHY IN NEWS:

World Thyroid Day is observed every **May 25**, marking the founding of the **European Thyroid Association (ETA) on May 25, 1965**. India is estimated to have **~42 million people with thyroid disorders**. Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) persist in pockets despite **Universal Salt Iodisation (USI) made mandatory in 1997**, and autoimmune thyroid disease is rising in urban India.

ABOUT WORLD THYROID DAY

- Declared in **2007** by **Thyroid Federation International (TFI)**
- Observed annually on **May 25**
- Commemorates the founding of the **European Thyroid Association (ETA)** on **May 25, 1965**
- Aim: raise public awareness about thyroid health, screening, and treatment

ABOUT THE THYROID GLAND

- An **endocrine gland**, butterfly-shaped, located in front of the neck
- Produces **thyroxine (T4)** and **triiodothyronine (T3)** hormones
- Regulates **metabolism, heart rate, body temperature**, and growth
- **Iodine** is essential for synthesising thyroid hormones

MAJOR THYROID DISORDERS

DISORDER	NATURE	KEY FEATURES
Hypothyroidism	Under-active thyroid	Weight gain, fatigue, cold intolerance
Hyperthyroidism	Over-active thyroid	Weight loss, palpitations, heat intolerance
Goitre	Gland enlargement	Visible neck swelling
Thyroid nodules	Lumps in gland	Mostly benign
Thyroid cancer	Malignancy	Papillary, follicular, medullary, anaplastic
Hashimoto's thyroiditis	Autoimmune	Causes hypothyroidism
Graves' disease	Autoimmune	Causes hyperthyroidism

INDIA'S THYROID EPIDEMIOLOGY

- Estimated **~42 million Indians** living with thyroid disorders
- **Hypothyroidism prevalence:** ~11% (ICMR studies)
- **Hyperthyroidism prevalence:** ~1.3%
- **Women** are 3–5 times more affected than men
- Sub-clinical hypothyroidism is rising in **urban populations**

IODINE DEFICIENCY DISORDERS (IDD)

Historical "Goitre Belt"

- Himalayan foothills
- Brahmaputra plains
- Parts of central India

IDD Spectrum

- Goitre
- Cretinism
- Mental retardation
- Stillbirths and neonatal mortality

INDIA'S RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

YEAR	PROGRAMME / ACTION
1962	National Goitre Control Programme launched
1992	Renamed National Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control Programme (NIDDCP)
1997	Universal Salt Iodisation (USI) made mandatory
Post-revision	Iodised salt: minimum 15 ppm at retail

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERSISTENT GAPS

- **Iodised salt consumption:** ~94% of households (NFHS-5, 2019-21)
- **Goitre prevalence** dropped from ~26 million pre-1992 to under 8 million today
- However, **Hashimoto's autoimmune thyroiditis** is rising despite iodine sufficiency
- **Iodine excess** is now reported from some regions

LINKAGES WITH OTHER HEALTH PROGRAMMES

- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of NCDs (NPCDCS), 2010** — broader non-communicable disease framework
- **National Health Mission (NHM)**
- **Ayushman Bharat PMJAY** — covers thyroid surgery and treatment

PROFESSIONAL BODIES

- **Indian Thyroid Society** — leading professional body
- **Endocrine Society of India**
- **Indian Cancer Society** — thyroid cancer awareness

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

Diagnostic Tests

- **TSH (Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone)** — first-line screening
- **Free T4 and T3** levels

- **Anti-TPO antibodies** for autoimmune disease

Treatment Options

- **Levothyroxine** (Eltroxin/Synthroid) — for hypothyroidism
- **Methimazole / Carbimazole** — for hyperthyroidism
- **Radioactive iodine therapy**
- **Surgery (thyroidectomy)** for selected cases

WAY FORWARD

- **Mass screening** in high-risk groups, especially pregnant women
- **Integration** of thyroid screening with NPCDCS clinics
- **Train ASHA workers** in goitre identification
- **Iodine monitoring** to manage over-iodisation risk
- Promote **selenium-rich diet** — selenium is a co-factor for thyroid hormone metabolism

UPSC RELEVANCE

- **GS Paper 2:** Health policy, NCDs, vulnerable groups, government interventions
- **GS Paper 3:** Nutrition, science behind iodisation
- **Prelims:** NIDDCP, USI norms, hormone names, salt iodisation %
- **Mains:** “Iodisation has eradicated visible goitre, but India’s thyroid burden has become autoimmune and urban.” Discuss.

FACTS CORNER:

World Thyroid Day: May 25 (since 2007)

Declared by: Thyroid Federation International (TFI)

Commemorates: founding of European Thyroid Association (May 25, 1965)

India's estimated thyroid disorder patients: ~42 million

Hypothyroidism prevalence: ~11%; Hyperthyroidism: ~1.3%

NIDDCP: launched 1992 (renamed from National Goitre Control Programme of 1962)

Universal Salt Iodisation (USI) mandatory: 1997

Iodised salt minimum: 15 ppm at retail

Iodised salt consumption (NFHS-5): ~94%

Levothyroxine: treatment for hypothyroidism

Hashimoto's thyroiditis — autoimmune hypothyroidism

Graves' disease — autoimmune hyperthyroidism

Sources: [Indian Thyroid Society](#), [MoHFW](#), [WHO](#)

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