



**The Australian  
Thyroid Foundation Ltd**

Tuesday 30th October 2007

## **Iodine Deficiency: New health threat to babies & mums**

The Australian Thyroid Foundation (ATF) is calling on all Australians, especially young women, to have their thyroid checked and ensure that there is adequate iodine in their diet to support good thyroid health.

New scientific research by Westmead Hospital shows there is an alarming incidence of thyroid disease among older Australians, with one in seven affected. Research also shows that children and pregnant women particularly are at risk of thyroid disorders from iodine deficiency.

"Everyone needs to ensure an adequate intake of iodine in their diet by consuming iodised salt or supplements containing iodine," Australian Thyroid Foundation patron, leading international endocrinologist and thyroid researcher, Professor Creswell Eastman, said today.

Ms Beverley Garside, Australian Thyroid Foundation President said today that iodine intake in the diet of Australians has declined recently because of decreasing amounts of iodine in dairy products and other foods.

"Low iodine levels are one of the most important health issues internationally for the IQ and health of children," she said. "Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or considering becoming pregnant should ensure they have an adequate amount of iodine in their diet or take a daily supplement to decrease the risk of having a baby with a lower IQ level.

"Failure to conceive, miscarriages, low birth weight and lower IQ levels may well reflect reduced iodine in the diet of Australian mothers," Ms Garside said.

The Australian Thyroid Foundation's national call to increase iodine intake is part of Thyroid Awareness Week, from 29 October to 2 November 2007. Thyroid Awareness Week is launched today with the 'Big Breakfast' in Sydney's Martin Place Amphitheatre, from 7.00 am to 11.00 am.

Australian Thyroid Foundation President and thyroid patient, Beverley Garside, said today that people will receive a free breakfast in Martin Place today when they buy a gold bow to support the Australian Thyroid Foundation.

The Big Breakfast features Australian Thyroid Foundation Ambassador and thyroid cancer survivor, Big Brother's Bree Amer, and "Sideshow" comedienne and thyroid patient, Claire Hooper.

"Important information about thyroid health and samples of Blackmores pregnancy and breast-feeding supplement and Saxa iodised salt are available at the breakfast," Ms Garside said. Blackmores and Saxa are proud sponsors of Australian Thyroid Foundation.

"Everyone is welcome to drop in to meet Ambassador Bree Amer and Claire Hooper, enjoy the 'Big Breakfast' and find out more about the importance of thyroid health," Ms Garside said.

"Our thyroid gland is part of our endocrine system, which secretes thyroid hormones that help to regulate metabolism – in other words, the many chemical processes that keep our bodies ticking over.

"Our thyroid is critical to our health and for good thyroid health, we need to include an adequate amount of iodine in our diet," Ms Garside said.

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## Note to Media

**What:** Thyroid Awareness Week Big Breakfast

**Who:** Big Brother's Bree Amer with the Australian Thyroid Foundation patron Professor Creswell Eastman, ATF President Beverley Garside and Claire Hooper from ABC TV 'Sideshow'.

**Where:** Martin Place Amphitheatre, between Pitt & Castlereagh Streets, Sydney

**When:** Tuesday 30 October 2007 – 7am to 11am

**Photo opportunity:** TBA

To arrange an interview with Professor Eastman, Beverley Garside, Bree Amer or Claire Hooper, please contact:

## Media contacts:

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## References:

- Prevalence of thyroid disease in an older Australian population. Empson M, Flood V, Ma G, Eastman CJ, Mitchell P. Internal Medicine Journal 37 (2007). Web reference: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?Db=PubMed&Cmd=ShowDetailView&TermToSearch=17547723>
- Iodine Supplementation: The benefits for pregnant and lactating women in Australia and New Zealand, Prof C Eastman, Westmead Hospital, O&G, Vol. 7 Number 1
- Are Australian children iodine deficient? Results of the Australian National Nutrition Study, Mu Li, Creswell Eastman, Kay V Waite, Gary Ma, Margaret R Zacharin, Duncan J Topliss, Philip E Harding, John P Walsh, Lynley C Ward, Robin H Mortimer, Emily J Mackenzie, Karen Byth and Zeldia Doyle, Medical Journal Of Australasia, 20-02-2006