Why do those with thyroid issues tend to have lower iron levels?

Just as hypothyroidism causes severe dryness of your external skin, it also seems to “dry out” the stomach by producing less acid. When this happens, its difficult for your body to properly digest and absorb nutrients and thus, many thyroid patients also have low levels of iron, B12, Vitamin D and more.

Symptoms of both low B12 and low iron mirror symptoms of hypothyroid: fatigue, irregular heart rate, loss of sex drive, hair loss, brain fog etc... sadly, many thyroid patients are so focused on the medicine, they underestimate the power of optimizing their nutrient uptake and utilization.

Iron, in addition to iodine, selenium B12 and zinc, are absolutely essential for normal thyroid hormone production and metabolism. B-12 is distinct from iron in its function but they are very closely interrelated. The body requires vitamin B-12 to produce red blood cells, and a deficiency in B12 will lead to a deficiency in iron.

Its good to note here that anemia is often times rooted in a B-12 deficiency, rather than an actual iron deficiency. Severe B12 deficiency in present in conditions like pernicious anemia, an autoimmune condition when a crucial protein needed to absorb B12 (called intrinsic factor) is destroyed by the body. But long before anemia sets in, B12 deficiency causes several other problems like those listed above: fatigue, brain fog and physiological stress.

Low iron could cause “false” reading of high TSH: Thyroid peroxidase is an enzyme that assists in your thyroid hormone production. This enzyme needs iron to ‘activate’ and do its job in building proper amounts of T4 and T3. If iron levels are low, and hormone production is subsequently low- this could falsely trigger a higher (hypo) TSH reading.

Your body thinks it needs to make more hormone, when in reality the source issue is inadequate iron levels. B Low iron can interfere with balanced cortisol: Balanced iron levels are also needed in the production of cortisol, and low iron can result in lower than normal cortisol levels.

Low iron can cause higher reverse T3: Earlier in this module, we talked about the dangers of reverse T3. Low iron levels can cause high RT3 production because without proper iron levels, the red blood cells in your body become weak. Weak cells simply aren’t “strong” enough to carry your thyroid hormones where they need to go. This causes a build up of T4 hormones in your bloodstream, just waiting around to be converted to T3. When this “pooling” of hormones occurs, your body will produce RT3 in an attempt to do something with the increasing T4 in your body. It’s a mechanism of flush and survival.
So what can you do?
My goal is to amp up all your vitamin, mineral and nutrient levels to improve your whole body health and hormone function by boosting nutrient absorption, healing your digestive process and enhancing your overall diet quality. Below is a quick 5-step plan to naturally boost your B12 levels and iron absorption.

1. Get properly tested for iron levels:
   1) Serum iron (iron available in your serum), 2) Ferritin (a protein which helps to store iron, properly keeping it usable for your body), 3) TIBC (total iron binding capacity) to help iron bind in the blood in order to carry it where needed. and 4) test your percentage of saturation 5) test your B12 levels! Many experts believe if you are symptomatic and have B12 levels less than 420-450 pg/mL, you should try a B12 supplement.

2. Consume foods rich in B12 and iron:
   dark, leafy greens (like kale, collards), wheat germ, spirulina, organic yogurt, salmon, limited organic and free-range meat, pasture raised eggs, and cook your meals in a cast iron skillet!

3. Boost Nutrient Synergies:
   Foods rich in vitamin C will naturally boost your body’s ability to absorb iron. Many plant based foods (like spinach) have this nutrient synergy built in by Mother Nature, but make sure to have an orange, some strawberries or any vitamin C rich food when consuming iron rich foods or taking supplements to maximize your body’s efforts.

4. Begin a quality mineral supplement and a food based B complex vitamins. Folate, a B vitamin assists your red blood cell formation and B-12 assists in producing red blood cells.

5. Add a teaspoon of lemon juice or apple cider vinegar to your morning water to boost healthy stomach acid production.