

How to Take Your Thyroid Medication

Important instructions for levothyroxine (Synthroid, Levoxyl, Tirosint) & liothyronine (Cytomel)

Why Timing Matters

Thyroid hormone replacement is one of the most commonly prescribed medications — and one of the most commonly taken incorrectly. Because it is absorbed in the intestine, many foods, supplements, and medications block its absorption. Following these instructions helps ensure your dose is effective.

The Golden Rules

- **Take it first thing in the morning** — immediately upon waking, before doing anything else.
- **Take it on an empty stomach** — at least 30–60 minutes before eating or drinking anything other than plain water.
- **Use plain water only** — do not take with coffee, juice, milk, or any other beverage.
- **Wait at least 30–60 minutes before eating breakfast.** The longer you wait, the better the absorption. 60 minutes is ideal.
- **Take it at the same time every day** — consistency matters more than the exact time.

■ **Missing doses or taking your medication inconsistently causes thyroid levels to fluctuate, leading to symptoms like fatigue, brain fog, weight changes, or heart palpitations.**

What to Avoid Within 4 Hours of Your Dose

Substance	Why It Matters
Coffee or espresso	Reduces levothyroxine absorption by up to 30%
Calcium supplements	Binds to medication and prevents absorption
Iron supplements or multivitamins with iron	Significantly reduces absorption
Antacids (Tums, Maalox, Mylanta)	Calcium carbonate blocks absorption
Magnesium supplements	Can interfere with absorption
High-fiber foods (bran, flaxseed)	Can reduce absorption if eaten immediately after
Soy products (milk, tofu, edamame)	May block absorption — space by at least 4 hours
Cholestyramine (Questran)	Significantly impairs absorption — take 4 hours apart

Alternative Option: Bedtime Dosing

If you cannot wait 30–60 minutes before eating breakfast, taking levothyroxine at bedtime is a valid alternative. Studies show bedtime dosing may actually result in slightly better absorption. Take it at least 3–4 hours after your last meal or snack.

If You Miss a Dose

- If you miss a dose and remember the same day — take it as soon as possible.
- If you miss a dose and it is already the next day — skip the missed dose and continue with your regular schedule.
- Do not double up doses.

Reminder: Bring this handout to your next appointment if you have any questions. Lab levels should be checked 6–8 weeks after any dose change.