

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to discuss these with the doctor in your thyroid clinic, or for more information contact Dr Anna Dover, Consultant Endocrinologist, on 0131 242 1479.

Selenium supplements for patients with thyroid-related eye disease

Information for patients

Introduction

This leaflet gives some information about the use of selenium supplements for patients with thyroid-related eye disease.

What is selenium?

Selenium is an essential trace element which acts as an antioxidant to protect cells in the body from damage. It is found naturally in foods including brazil nuts, seafood and meat and is added as a supplement to some grains and cereals.

Why have supplements been recommended?

Selenium may play a protective role in diseases including cancer, cardiovascular disease, cognitive decline and thyroid disease.

Selenium supplements have been recommended by your doctor because they can slow the progression of mild to moderate thyroid-related eye disease and can improve the appearance and visual function of the eyes.

How much should I take, and for how long?

We recommend that selenium is taken in a dose of 200 microgrammes per day, for six months in the first instance.

Are there circumstances in which I should not take selenium?

We recommend stopping selenium for a week before, and during, any radiotherapy treatment. We also do not routinely recommend selenium supplements if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Selenium may reduce the effectiveness of cholesterol-lowering drugs known as statins, but on balance, if you have significant eye symptoms, the benefits of selenium probably outweigh this possible temporary effect on your cholesterol levels.

Where can I buy selenium?

Selenium is available to buy over-the-counter or online, at most chemists and health food stores, including: Boots, 101-103 Princes St, EH2 3AA; Holland & Barrett, 124 Nicolson Street, EH8 9EH and Napiers, 18 Bristo Place, EH1 1EZ.

Are there any side-effects?

You are not likely to experience any side-effects when taking selenium at the recommended dose. Long term high dose administration (more than 400 microgrammes daily) can result in symptoms which include hair loss, brittle nails and a metallic taste in the mouth.