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How Kelly Clarkson Lost 37 Pounds After Struggling With Thyroid Problems for Years

By bestfolkmedicine · 04/11/2026 · 9 min read



The Grammy-winning singer once credited a major weight loss to changing the way she ate while managing thyroid and autoimmune problems. Years later, she revealed another important health concern. Her story raises questions about hormones, metabolism, inflammation, and why losing weight isn't always as simple as eating less.

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For years, Kelly Clarkson has been admired for her powerful voice, outspoken personality, and refusal to let Hollywood beauty standards define her.

But behind the spotlight, the singer has also faced personal health challenges.

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In 2018, Clarkson surprised fans when she revealed that she had lost approximately 37 pounds after making significant dietary changes.

What made her story particularly interesting wasn't simply the weight loss.

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She explained that she had been dealing with thyroid and autoimmune problems dating back to 2006.

And according to Clarkson, improving her health was always more important than changing her appearance.

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But her story didn't end there.

In 2024, she revealed that she had been diagnosed with prediabetes and had eventually started taking prescription medication to support her metabolic health and weight management.

These revelations highlight something millions of people experience: weight changes can involve much more than calories, exercise, and willpower.

The Thyroid Problem Kelly Clarkson Had Been Managing for Years

During a 2018 appearance on NBC's Today show, Clarkson discussed living with thyroid and autoimmune health problems.

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She said the issues had begun around 2006.

Although she did not publicly establish every detail of her thyroid diagnosis, she explained that managing her health had become an important priority.

The thyroid gland is a small, butterfly-shaped organ located at the front of the neck.

Despite its size, it influences numerous processes throughout the body.

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Thyroid hormones help regulate metabolism, body temperature, heart rate, energy production, and normal cellular activity.

When thyroid hormone levels become too low, a condition called hypothyroidism can develop.

Common symptoms include fatigue, sensitivity to cold, constipation, dry skin, thinning hair, and weight gain.

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These symptoms often appear gradually, making thyroid disorders difficult to recognize without appropriate testing.

Can Thyroid Problems Really Cause Weight Gain?

Yes, but the relationship is often misunderstood.

An underactive thyroid can reduce the body's resting energy expenditure, meaning fewer calories may be burned during normal daily functioning.

However, thyroid-related weight gain is generally less dramatic than many people assume.

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According to the American Thyroid Association, approximately 5–10 pounds of weight gain may be attributable to hypothyroidism in many patients, depending on disease severity.

Much of this increase comes from retaining water and salt rather than accumulating body fat.

Severe hypothyroidism can sometimes cause more pronounced changes.

This distinction is important because unexplained weight gain is not always caused by the thyroid.

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Sleep disturbances, medications, hormonal changes, reduced physical activity, and other medical conditions may also contribute.

Treating hypothyroidism can help restore normal metabolic function, but it does not automatically produce major weight loss.

The Dietary Change Behind Clarkson's 37-Pound Weight Loss

Clarkson's weight-loss story attracted widespread attention in 2018 when she revealed that she had adopted dietary ideas from The Plant Paradox, a book written by physician Steven Gundry.

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The eating plan emphasizes avoiding or limiting certain foods containing lectins.

Lectins are naturally occurring proteins found in many plant foods, including beans, lentils, grains, and some vegetables.

The book promotes the theory that restricting particular lectin-containing foods may benefit certain health conditions.

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Clarkson explained that she had changed ingredients and food preparation methods rather than simply abandoning all the foods she enjoyed.

She also said her 37-pound weight loss was an unexpected result of those changes.

At the time, she reported improvements in her bloodwork and said she had stopped taking some medications.

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However, these were her personal experiences, not evidence that a particular diet can cure thyroid disease.

Are Lectins Really Harmful to Your Health?

This is where nutrition science tells a more complicated story.

Although lectins have gained considerable attention in alternative health discussions, most lectin-containing foods are not inherently harmful.

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Beans, lentils, whole grains, and vegetables provide fiber, vitamins, minerals, and beneficial plant compounds.

Some raw or improperly cooked beans contain active lectins that can cause gastrointestinal illness.

However, proper preparation and cooking substantially reduce lectin activity.

Research has not established that avoiding all dietary lectins reverses autoimmune disease, restores thyroid function, or produces superior long-term weight loss.

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In fact, unnecessarily eliminating legumes and whole grains may reduce dietary fiber and other important nutrients.

The European Food Safety Authority has emphasized that properly processed and cooked legumes are generally safe to consume.

The important takeaway is that Clarkson's reported success with a particular eating pattern does not mean everyone with thyroid problems should follow the same diet.

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The Unexpected Health Revelation She Made in 2024

Several years after discussing her original weight loss, Clarkson shared another important detail about her health.

During an episode of The Kelly Clarkson Show in early 2024, she revealed that doctors had previously told her she was prediabetic.

Prediabetes occurs when blood glucose levels are higher than normal but have not reached the diagnostic threshold for type 2 diabetes.

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It is associated with an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Clarkson explained that the diagnosis encouraged her to reconsider her lifestyle.

She described making dietary adjustments and becoming more physically active after relocating to New York City.

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Walking regularly became a meaningful part of her daily routine.

Then, in May 2024, Clarkson confirmed that prescription medication had also played a role in her more recent weight-loss journey.

She clarified that she was not taking Ozempic, despite widespread speculation.

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Instead, she described using a different medication related to how her body processes sugar.

She did not publicly identify the medication.

These disclosures are important because her 2018 weight loss and her more recent weight changes were different periods involving different reported health decisions.

Attributing all of her weight loss solely to thyroid management or one particular diet would therefore be misleading.

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7 Signs Your Thyroid May Need Medical Attention

Thyroid disorders can produce symptoms that overlap with other health conditions.

The following changes may warrant evaluation, particularly when several appear together.

1. Unexplained Weight Changes

Weight gain can occur with an underactive thyroid, while an overactive thyroid may contribute to unintentional weight loss.

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Neither symptom is sufficient to diagnose a thyroid disorder.

2. Persistent Fatigue

Feeling unusually tired despite adequate rest can occur when thyroid hormone production is insufficient.

Fatigue can also result from anemia, poor sleep, stress, and other conditions.

3. Hair Thinning or Excessive Shedding

Thyroid hormone imbalances can affect the normal hair growth cycle.

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Some people notice diffuse thinning rather than isolated bald patches.

4. Increased Sensitivity to Cold

People with hypothyroidism may feel unusually cold because thyroid hormones influence metabolic heat production.

5. Constipation and Slower Digestion

Low thyroid hormone levels can slow gastrointestinal activity, contributing to constipation.

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6. Dry Skin and Changes in Hair Texture

Some individuals develop drier skin or changes in hair quality as thyroid function declines.

7. Menstrual Irregularities

Thyroid disorders can affect reproductive hormones and menstrual patterns, sometimes contributing to heavier or irregular periods.

If these symptoms persist, a healthcare professional may recommend blood tests such as thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) and free thyroxine (free T4).

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What Actually Supports Healthy Thyroid Function?

A balanced diet and healthy lifestyle support general endocrine health, but they cannot replace medical treatment for an established hormone deficiency.

Get Adequate Iodine—But Avoid Excess

Iodine is essential for thyroid hormone production.

Food sources include iodized salt, dairy products, eggs, seafood, and some other foods.

However, excessive iodine can aggravate certain thyroid conditions, particularly autoimmune thyroid disorders.

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High-dose iodine supplementation should not be started without appropriate medical guidance.

Include Selenium-Rich Foods

Selenium contributes to enzymes involved in thyroid hormone metabolism and antioxidant defense.

Sources include fish, eggs, meat, legumes, and Brazil nuts.

More is not always better. Excessive selenium intake can cause toxicity.

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Prioritize Adequate Protein

Protein supports muscle maintenance, tissue repair, and overall metabolic health.

Eggs, fish, yogurt, beans, lentils, tofu, and other protein sources can contribute to daily nutritional needs.

Maintain Regular Physical Activity

Walking, resistance training, swimming, and other suitable activities support cardiovascular health, metabolic function, and muscle strength.

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Exercise is beneficial, but it cannot correct an untreated thyroid hormone deficiency.

Protect Sleep and Manage Stress

Chronic sleep problems can influence appetite regulation, energy levels, and glucose metabolism.

Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule and incorporating relaxing activities may support overall well-being.

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These habits complement appropriate thyroid care rather than replace it.

Can You Stop Taking Thyroid Medication After Changing Your Diet?

This is one of the most important questions raised by Clarkson's earlier statements.

Some thyroid conditions are temporary, while others require lifelong medication.

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For example, people with persistent hypothyroidism caused by Hashimoto's disease frequently need thyroid hormone replacement.

Levothyroxine replaces hormone the body cannot produce adequately.

Stopping prescribed medication without appropriate medical supervision can cause thyroid hormone levels to become abnormal again.

Although dietary improvements may benefit someone with a thyroid disorder, there is no reliable evidence that a lectin-free diet can routinely replace thyroid hormone treatment.

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Anyone considering a medication change should discuss it with their healthcare professional and undergo appropriate monitoring.

The Bigger Lesson Behind Kelly Clarkson's Health Journey

Clarkson's story is interesting because it challenges several assumptions about weight and health.

Her experiences illustrate that metabolic health can involve multiple factors, including thyroid function, blood sugar regulation, dietary habits, physical activity, and medical treatment.

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They also demonstrate why celebrity weight-loss stories should not be interpreted as universal medical advice.

A dietary approach that feels helpful to one individual may be unnecessarily restrictive or ineffective for another.

Similarly, medication can be an appropriate part of treatment when supported by an individual's medical circumstances.

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The goal should not be to reproduce a celebrity's weight loss. It should be to understand your own health and choose an approach that is safe, sustainable, and appropriate for your body.

The Bottom Line: Thyroid Health Is About More Than the Number on the Scale

Kelly Clarkson's reported 37-pound weight loss in 2018 brought public attention to the relationship between thyroid conditions, diet, and metabolic health.

Her later disclosures about prediabetes and prescription medication added an important dimension to that story.

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The thyroid plays a significant role in energy metabolism, but it is rarely the only factor involved in substantial weight changes.

Maintaining healthy thyroid function requires appropriate diagnosis, evidence-based treatment when necessary, adequate nutrition, and consistent lifestyle habits.

And perhaps the most important lesson from Clarkson's experience is that personal health cannot be measured by appearance alone.

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A healthier body isn’t simply one that weighs less. It’s one whose underlying medical needs are understood and properly supported.

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