

## Croton mom promoting seaweed as a health food

Written by

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**CROTON-ON-HUDSON** — Eleanor Kwei went through a bad phase shortly after she turned 40.

She couldn't concentrate, and found herself constantly fatigued and irritable. Her skin was dry, her eyes puffy. It wasn't a middle-age crisis, however, or a chronic [medical condition](#), but something much easier to fix.

Her cousin, a medical doctor, heard her discuss the symptoms she was experiencing and quickly concluded she was not getting enough iodine in her diet. Kwei started eating seaweed the next day, and she's been a changed woman ever since.

Now Kwei, a freelance illustrator and graphic designer from Croton-on-Hudson, is promoting humble seaweed — the grassy fibers of the ocean — as an iodine-rich nutrient that can be an easy and effective way to improve health. She is promoting a book she recently completed on ways to add seaweed to one's diet.

"Many people are iodine deficient but don't

know it," said Kwei, 47, a married mother of two young children. "The symptoms are very similar to stress-induced diseases. It masquerades as a lifestyle issue."

Kwei consulted on the book with her sister, Gloria Kwei, who has a doctoral degree and works for a drug company.

While iodine is commonly consumed as an additive in table salt, the mineral is not found in gourmet salts, and people who use those fancy salts may end up losing a major source of the mineral. The lack of iodine can cause problems with the thyroid gland and trigger other ailments. Women need more iodine than men.

Kwei, who is ethnically Chinese with a bit of Japanese ancestry, notes that seaweed is held in high regard in Asia as a flavor enhancer, adding a depth of savory taste to many dishes.

"You can put it in soups or stews, and you don't even have to eat it, the nutrients are there. It's a mineral and doesn't break

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down in cooking," she says. Her book, "The Thyroid Crisis and the Seaweed Remedy," which will be available soon at Amazon.com and marketed to health food stores, contains a number of recipes that incorporate seaweed.

Besides being a good source of iodine and other vitamins, seaweed might also work to eliminate toxins from the body.

Kwei notes her own kids love cheeseburgers more than the Asian dishes she grew up with, but there are easy ways to make seaweed palatable for everyone.

Elizabeth DeRobertis, a registered dietitian based in Scarsdale, says she doesn't see many cases of iodine deficiency in her work, but notes that seaweed can offer some health benefits.

"It's low in calories, and it has vitamins. It's always good to explore new foods, and getting healthy vegetables in your diet is a benefit," she said, adding she had just had some for lunch. "People tend to focus on one thing, a shortcut. It's good to eat a variety of foods."

Kwei likes to make all kinds of food, keeps a well-stocked kitchen and enjoys cooking. She says good food and good health should go together like a pair of chopsticks.

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