

'Star Wars' star has Graves' disease: What is this disorder?

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"Star Wars" actor Daisy Ridley has been diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder that can come with serious consequences: heart failure, stroke and thinning bones, just to name a few. With more than 3.3 million

Americans affected by the disease, she's hardly alone.

The "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" star revealed during an interview with Women's Health that she was diagnosed with Graves' disease in September 2023. Ridley was suffering from bouts of hot flashes and fatigue after filming "Magpie." That's when her doctor encouraged her to see an endocrinologist.

"I thought, 'Well, I've just played a really stressful role; presumably that's why I feel poorly,'" she told the news outlet. It wasn't.

Speaking to the specialist, she explained she had a racing heart rate, fatigue, hand tremors and was losing weight unexpectedly. "Tired but wired" is how the doctor explained the disease to her.

According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, Graves' disease is an autoimmune disorder that can cause hyperthyroidism. The thyroid, which lies near your voice box, creates hormones that control the body's energy usage. That's why an overactive thyroid can lead to a wide variety of health issues, including in the heart.

It affects roughly 1% of people in the United States and is responsible for 80% of all hyperthyroidism cases. The disorder is more common in women, people over 30, those with a family history of the disease and people with other autoimmune disorders.

Ridley—a native of Westminster, London—is 32 years old. In the U.K, as of October 2023, the disease affects up to 1.6% of women.

Common symptoms include [weight loss](#) (despite an increased appetite), [irregular heartbeat](#), irritability, fatigue, [muscle weakness](#) and hand tremors. But more than a third of patients also develop an eye disease:

Graves' ophthalmopathy.

A result of the body's immune system attacking the eye muscles, symptoms often include bulging, and irritated and puffy eyes, as well as blurred vision, light sensitivity and pain.

"Researchers aren't sure why some people develop [autoimmune disorders](#) such as Graves' disease," the institute reported. "These disorders probably develop from a combination of genes and an outside trigger, such as a virus."

"With Graves' disease, your immune system makes an antibody called thyroid-stimulating immunoglobulin (TSI) that attaches to your thyroid cells," the NIDDK continued. "TSI acts like [thyroid-stimulating hormone](#) (TSH), a hormone made in your [pituitary gland](#) that tells your thyroid how much thyroid hormone to make. TSI causes your thyroid to make too much [thyroid](#) hormone."

Treatments for Graves' disease include radioiodine therapy and surgery, though medication is sometimes sufficient.

Already suffering from endometriosis and [polycystic ovarian syndrome](#), the Hollywood star is still in high spirits, and she encourages other women suffering to come forward.

"We all read the stats about women being undiagnosed or underdiagnosed and sort of coming to terms with saying, 'I really, actually don't feel good' and not going, 'I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine.' It's just normalized to not feel good," she said.

"In the grand scheme of things, it's much less severe than what a lot of people go through," she later added. "Even if you can deal with it, you shouldn't have to. If there's a problem, you shouldn't have to just (suffer

through it)."

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