

The Thyroid Gland and Thyroid Activity

Today's women should feel healthy, energetic and emotionally and physically strong throughout their adult life. Many, who don't maintain their healthy, energetic and physical strength and have various presenting symptoms, have been told by a physician, "It's in your head," or "You're just going to have to live with it." If this has ever happened to you – please read on. Jackie was a 42 year old woman who presented at the Natural Wellness Centre with a multi-year history of depression and fatigue which developed greatly after giving birth to her first child. As long as she could remember, she had cold hands and feet (always wore socks to bed) and had a profound sensitivity to cold. Over the past several months, she felt as though she had an increased amount of hair loss, had a variety of bowel issues including constipation and seemed to have aches and pains more than she felt she should have for her age. After sleeping (which usually wasn't long or deep sleep), Jackie never felt rested.

She had experienced allergies and recurrent sinus infections, as well as headaches over the past 5 plus years – and multiple prescriptions of antibiotics had been taken. Jackie had recurrent abdominal cramping, bloating and gaseousness which she had associated with sugar and wheat products – which she stated she craved all of the time. Since her pregnancy, her menstrual cycles have been irregular. She has gained 26 pounds and has had the most difficult time in her life losing the weight. She states that she has felt a "brain fog" and has lost all interest in sexual intimacy.

Jackie sought answers from a variety of physicians. She had been told that she was, "depressed," and prescribed anti-depressants. She had tried a variety of over-the-counter vitamins with no effect. Jackie's name could easily be replaced with hundreds of other women in midlife with similar stories. The problems experienced by the majority of these women often originate from hormonal changes; especially, **a condition known as "estrogen dominance," which is triggered by a functional hypothyroid state.**

Do You Have Hypothyroidism? Hypothyroidism is a condition caused by a small malfunction of your thyroid gland where there is a lack of production of thyroid hormone. It develops when the thyroid gland does not produce enough of the hormone which controls the way the body uses energy. A lack of thyroid hormone can affect all body systems and produce a variety of problems.

However, a functional problem of the thyroid gland means that its function is slightly abnormal; but, the gland itself is usually not diseased; thus, not a pathological hypothyroid. Since thyroid activity may not be drastically altered with a functional thyroid condition, lab tests often confirm that you are still within normal range; hence, a frequent misdiagnosis. The unfortunate catch with this problem is the dynamic activity of the thyroid gland. **A thyroid function in the low-normal laboratory range may be *abnormal* for you.** In this case, you will suffer a wide variety of symptoms without any tangible cause.

Often, the cause of a functional hypothyroid state is a product of your own lifestyle. This means that the cause is usually dietary, nutritional or environmental. In some cases, functional hypothyroid is the earliest signal of future thyroid disease and early treatment is important. The symptoms of a functional hypothyroid are often the same as a pathological hypothyroid. Depending upon the degree of hypothyroidism, a patient may have one, some or all of the below listed symptoms: fatigue, headaches, weight gain, muscle and joint pain, cold extremities, a large thyroid gland, cold intolerance, menstrual irregularities, decreased sweating, loss of libido, recurrent infections, allergic disorders, decreased mental sharpness (brain fog), depression or mood swings, infertility, dry skin, hair loss, constipation, fluid retention, brittle finger nails with ridging, enlarged tongue with teeth indentations, loss of hair in the outer edge of the eyebrows, low blood pressure, slow pulse rate, tingling and numbness in the extremities, elevated cholesterol and triglycerides, morning headaches which wear off during the day, dry skin and even ringing in the ears.

Because thyroid hormones promote the burning of glucose for energy, the most noticeable effects of hypothyroidism – fatigue, weight gain and sensitivity to cold – have to do with a slow down in energy and heat production. Essentially... the thyroid gland is kind of like a heater in your body and when it's not working right; you've got a faulty thermostat. However, thyroid hormones also regulate tissue growth and development; help maintain blood pressure and fluid balance and affect the workings of virtually every cell in your body. For that reason, a deficiency state can cause a wide range of symptoms as listed above.

The brain is highly sensitive to hormone depletion and patients with low levels of thyroid hormones often experience depression and problems with concentration and short-term memory. A deficiency of thyroid hormones can also affect levels of sex hormones causing menstrual abnormalities in women and a loss of libido in both sexes. Thyroid functional deficiencies can also impair fertility; and, if it is present during pregnancy can cause miscarriage or premature delivery. **Various causes of hypothyroidism include: iodine deficiency, aging, allergies and a very common cause of hypothyroidism; adrenal fatigue.**

Powerful nutrients needed by the thyroid gland for proper function are: vitamin F found in seeds, nuts and pressed oil such as safflower oil, organic iodine, calcium and vitamin B. Appropriate supplementation, as well as the possibility of natural hormonal replacement may be necessary in order to help enhance your body's physiology to help improve glandular function.

If you are suffering any of the above symptoms, it is certainly suggestive of low thyroid function and you should see your doctor for a blood test. If it shows normal, you may be suffering from functional hypothyroid and you should take action. If you do not, you may suffer needlessly for years and develop a more aggressive thyroid disease later in life. Oftentimes, blood tests alone are utilized to diagnose hypothyroidism and if the tests come out normal, the individual is labeled a hypochondriac or told that they're depressed and sent off with a prescription for an antidepressant. Most importantly, you don't want to become a female medical statistic, with years spent searching for the causes of your problems in a variety of different doctor's offices – including the psychiatrist.

One of the most important tools in determining a patient's thyroid status is a thorough review of the patient's symptoms, along with a thorough physical examination. Laboratory data can be helpful to confirm the diagnosis; but, when the results or lab tests do not correspond to the patient's signs and symptoms, we must remember that physicians treat patients; we don't treat only the lab tests. Most often, patients don't lie – lab tests can! Please remember... if you feel that you may have functional hypothyroidism be assertive in finding the cause of your condition and don't just allow physicians to treat your symptoms. For an excellent review of hypothyroidism with an in-depth look at the various causes go to www.hotzehwc.com and click on Hypothyroidism 101.

In closing... Prior to Jackie's arrival at Natural Wellness Centre, Jackie had been made to feel by several of the doctors she visited, that she was a hypochondriac, emotionally weak and not able to deal with a lot of her symptoms. I explained to her that her symptoms were very common to women in her age group and could often be effectively treated. Saliva testing found that she had an imbalance in her female hormones that were affecting her body's ability to use the thyroid hormones. It was the change in her hormones that had triggered her allergy disorder which lead to the recurrent colds and sinus infections.

Unfortunately, the antibiotics which she had taken for her infections destroyed all the normal bacteria in her bowel (which they typically do) and that allowed her yeast problems (Candidiasis) to occur. Proper, natural hormone replacement and supplementation was provided. Within several months, Jackie's depression and fatigue all but disappeared; and, with her family physician's approval, she was able to discontinue her antidepressants and her energy level markedly improved. In short, Jackie got better! As we so often hear; Jackie stated, "I didn't think I could feel this good again – I wish I would have gotten here sooner."

When an alternative approach to the ongoing usage of medication just to relieve symptoms is desired – our "Healthy Life by Design" program for restoring the body's physiology and healthy function should be a consideration. For additional information see us on the web at: www.naturalwellnesscentre.net. This article is authored by Dr. James R. Grilliot, a chiropractic physician and director of Natural Wellness Centre; phone number: 740-687-0279.

It would be our privilege to serve you!