

The Thyroid Connection

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Have you ever visited a seaside resort and noticed that within just a few hours you feel great? You feel full of energy and vigor and your feelings of lethargy, problem skin, etc. disappear after only a few days - even your sex drive is rejuvenated. The reason could be as simple as the presence of iodine, in the sea and ocean breeze, feeding your thyroid gland. People living far from the seashore generally lack this natural source of iodine. Women are more likely to develop thyroid disease than men. In fact, women are eight times more likely to suffer from a dysfunctional thyroid during their lifetime than men. Most thyroid conditions start in the perimenopausal and menopausal stages, when the endocrine system experiences many changes. Countless female patients have entered our clinic with very similar complaints - "I'm gaining weight"; "I have no energy", "I feel chilled all the time". In most cases, these women have seen a medical doctor and have been assured that there is nothing wrong with their thyroid gland, because the blood test results were within a "normal" parameter. How could it be possible that the symptoms and complaints are irrelevant, while demanding attention, yet the blood results do not support the obvious? Could it be that the current tests are not complete or thorough?

What are the symptoms of an under-active thyroid?

A woman with an under-active thyroid may experience one or a combination of the symptoms below. If left untreated the symptoms generally get worse:

Fatigue	Fluid retention	Insomnia
Cold intolerance, including cold hands and feet	Goitre (Thyroid enlargement)	Weight gain or inability to lose weight
Dry skin	Heart palpitations and/or slow pulse	Low body temperature
Constipation	High cholesterol	Yellow discoloration on skin, palms
Sluggish metabolism	Loss of hair, dry or brittle hair	Memory loss and/or loss of concentration
Swollen or drooping eyes, puffy face in morning	Low sex drive	Infertility
Depression	PMS, painful menstrual cramps	Muscle aches

The proper way to reduce or eliminate these symptoms is to remove the cause - to remedy the thyroid problem causing the symptoms.

How is an under-active (hypo) thyroid diagnosed?

Most likely, your doctor will order a TSH (Thyroid Stimulating Hormone) test. Elevated TSH levels indicate an under-active (hypo) thyroid, and low TSH levels indicate an over-active (hyper) thyroid. The conventional normal values are between 0.35 - 5.0. When the TSH levels are within this normal range, it is assumed that the thyroid gland is healthy and functioning normally. However, this "normal" range of health is much too broad. Some physicians suggest that TSH results of less than 1 and over 2, combined with the presence of clinical symptoms, shows that there is a thyroid dysfunction, which may require treatment.

Two other tests that may be done are called "T4" and "T3". However pregnancy, estrogen replacement therapy, birth control pills, and especially stress may interfere with these results.

Iodine and Selenium are co-factors in thyroid metabolism. A deficiency of these and other essential nutrients may be responsible for certain symptoms, as they all play a role in optimizing the health of the thyroid. Lacking these essential nutrients perpetuates a thyroid problem at the cellular level, although TSH lab values may seem normal. Many people remain undiagnosed and untreated because many health practitioners rely solely on these numerical values. The most important factor - the patient's symptoms - has not been taken into consideration.

What is the feminine connection?

One of the most overlooked factors contributing to an under-active thyroid is estrogen dominance. Estrogen replacement therapy and estrogen dominance decreases the function of the thyroid gland. Since the organs of the endocrine system are interdependent, the hypo-function of one organ will have a cascading effect on the rest of

the system. Estrogen and progesterone imbalance, which frequently starts in perimenopause, is often overlooked as a contributing factor to thyroid dysfunction. Conversely, thyroid function is central to all of the metabolic functions of the body, and it profoundly affects our overall health.

How can I get help?

The thyroid connection is a very complicated subject. Very few health care providers understand the thyroid connection well enough to provide an effective treatment. Many symptoms are misunderstood. The classic symptoms of thyroid disease are usually attributed to aging, menopause, or other conditions such as "chronic fatigue syndrome". It is very important to get to the root of the symptoms with proper tests and assessment. The thyroid is extremely sensitive and central to all metabolic functions, and many factors can interfere with the test results. When a proper assessment is determined the treatment becomes much more effective.

I have found in my practice that homeopathic medications are very safe and helpful to my patients. Homeopathic medicines do not bio-chemically override the patient - they simply allow the patient's own system to self-correct. In some cases, treatment may be combined with an over-the-counter supplement such as T-100. In other cases, iodine supplement may provide sufficient support for the thyroid gland to correct itself. Another treatment includes natural desiccated thyroid, which has been used effectively to help manage and resolve symptoms. If all else fails, synthetic and lifelong replacement of thyroxin should be considered. But the best and most important advice I can give you is to seek the help of a competent health care professional who will assess your condition using a holistic approach.