



Thyroid Testing- Thoroughness Is Key

It used to be a longstanding joke between my husband and I that I my backside was always extremely cold, and couldn't rewarm! For years I also had the coldest nose, fingers and feet, and I regularly asked for wool socks from him as gifts. Now, many winters later, and with thyroid support and a better understanding of my immune system, those days of cold are long gone. I am warm, and I wear regular socks! Living in Winnipeg, Manitoba with arctic temperatures in the winter, I am very grateful! I'd had my thyroid function assessed many times, but was never told that it was a problem, when in fact, it was. It took a Naturopathic and functional approach to evaluating thyroid labs to determine the root of my health problems and coldness.

Many people have poorly or sluggishly functioning thyroid glands and aren't aware. They may feel that something is off, whether they feel tired, or low motivation, or have pains, or can't lose weight as they once could. The thyroid gland is in charge of metabolism- which means the "the chemical processes that occur within a living organism in order to maintain life", and boils down to calorie burning, muscle building, rate of digestion and elimination of waste, body temperature, and moreso, it is an important part of the body's endocrine or hormone system. It is very important, and can create a well balanced body or a very sluggish, ineffective one. The thyroid produces two hormones, called Thyroxine and Tri-iodothyronine, also referred to as T3 and T4. These can be measured as freely roaming about in the bloodstream or bound to receptors.

An important element in helping support the thyroid is to have thorough testing done. In my experience, the measurement of Thyroid Stimulating hormone (TSH) is a useful screening tool for some thyroid problems, but not all. Sometimes the TSH is "normal", but it is not optimal. The ranges for optimal and normal thyroid stimulating hormone is different. It is helpful to also evaluate the amount of thyroid hormones being produced, as well as the body's ability to convert free T4 to the more active hormone, free T3. In my case, my immune system, already dealing with the auto-immune disease Lupus, was also attacking my thyroid, resulting in the production of anti-thyroid antibodies, which were binding to my thyroid gland making it less effective. This phenomenon, called Auto-immune Thyroiditis (or Hashimoto's Disease), is common in the general population. The immune system frequently undergoes changes and begins to attack the thyroid. Most individuals do not know if their bodies are attacking their thyroid gland unless specific testing is performed. The development of Auto-immune thyroid disease can lead to an overfunction or an underfunction of the thyroid gland. It is commonly triggered by viral illnesses, bacterial infections, and nutrient deficiencies.



Stress can negatively impact the thyroid by getting in the way of the conversion of T4 to T3 hormones. Under any kind of acute or prolonged stress, the body may begin to make a hormone that does nothing but is mistaken for T3, because it looks almost identical, and it fits into receptors that use T3. Ultimately this creates a blocking effect, as T3 can't bind to receptors or do its job. The hormone is called Reverse T3. When Reverse T3 is elevated, it signifies a non thyroid based problem at the root, but thyroid hormone cannot do its job properly.

A healthy thyroid is a key to good health. When optimal health is the goal, evaluating the thyroid function thoroughly can shed light on the true diagnosis of thyroid dysfunction or a problem impacting the thyroid. Each patient is individual and deserves an efficient personalized treatment plan which may include nutritional changes, vitamins, minerals, stress management techniques, immune support and education.

I hope this is a valuable resource for you and your loved ones, and wish you the best of health.

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