

Do You Have A Low Thyroid?

Contributed by Dr. Paul G. Jensen

Because Hypothyroidism mimics many unrelated health problems, it is often missed. Its estimated that as many as 40% of the population could benefit from having some type of thyroid treatment.

The following is a partial list of symptoms that can be caused by low thyroid function:

Always cold

No energy

Weight gain Weakness

Acne

Dry skin

Skin Rashes

Loss of skin pigment Thickened skin over
the shins

Digestive and gallbladder problems

Constipation

High Or Low Blood Pressure

High cholesterol

Swelling

Numbness

Hair Loss

Loss of eyebrows on the sides

Dry, scaly or course hair

Menstrual problems

Infertility

Arthritis

Fibromyalgia

Carpal tunnel

Insomnia

Irregular heartbeat

Heart disease

Hoarseness

Difficulty swallowing

Swollen neck

Eye problems

Headaches

Confusion

Depression

Anxiety

The thyroid is called the "master gland" because it is involved in all processes that take place in the body. Over 100 symptoms have been associated with hypothyroidism. If thyroid function is low, nothing in the body works quite right.

Some of the more common causes of hypothyroid are explained below.

- Inadequate production of thyroid hormone (T4). This problem is detected by testing the T4 levels in the blood. The common treatment is thyroid hormone replacement such as Synthroid (synthetic T4). Many patients given synthetic T4 see no improvement, because their body has difficulty converting the T4 drug to T3 (the active form of thyroid hormone).
- Physical or emotional stress can cause the body to perceive that it needs to slow down its metabolic rate. The body accomplishes this by producing an inactive form of thyroid hormone called "reverse T3" from T4. (Note that reverse T3 is detected as active T3 on a blood test). Starvation dieting, pregnancy, illness or traumas are examples of stressful events that trigger reverse T3 production. Even after the stressful event has passed, the body may not switch back to producing active T3.
- The adrenal glands, which regulate the availability of the body's fuel supply, can also become over taxed during prolonged stress. If the body's fuel supply slows, the thyroid (which controls the burning of this fuel supply) will also slow down. This is why many hypothyroids must also be treated for adrenal weakness. If they are only given thyroid hormone without treating the adrenal problem, they will have even less energy.
- Certain nutrients must be available for the thyroid gland to be able to manufacture thyroid hormones. Improper nutrition can also cause the cells of the thyroid gland to break down. This can trigger an autoimmune response such as Hashimoto's Thyroiditis. An enlarged thyroid (goiter) is also caused by a lack of nutrients.

· Many chemicals (i.e. chlorine, fluoride, aspartame, trans fats, steroids and many other drugs) can cause thyroid malfunction.

· Estrogenic compounds including pesticides, plastic compounds, soy and estrogen hormones can tie up thyroid binding sites preventing the individual cells of the body from utilizing thyroid hormone. Mercury (silver fillings in teeth is a major source) can also tie up these binding sites.

· Because the liver uses large amounts of thyroid, an inadequately functioning liver slows down thyroid hormone production by negative feedback inhibition. This is an example of how necessary it is to evaluate all the body's systems because of their relationships to each other.

As you can see from the above examples, blood testing by itself does not guarantee that you have normal thyroid function. In addition, patients on thyroid medication may have normal blood levels as a result of the drug being present in their blood stream, but still have low thyroid function.

Evaluating Your Thyroid

There is a very simple and accurate way of evaluating thyroid function called the "basal temperature test". This procedure was developed by Broda Barnes M. D. author of the book, Hypothyroidism the Unsuspected Illness. The procedure is as follows.

Obtain the use of an old-fashioned, glass (mercury) thermometer or new mercury free analog thermometer (available at our office).

At night before going to bed, shake your thermometer down to 94 degrees and set your alarm 10 minutes earlier than you need to get up.

In the morning, before getting out of bed or doing any activity, place the thermometer deep in your armpit next to your skin. Leave for 10 full minutes, read and record. Be careful to read the thermometer lines accurately.

If you are a women during the menstruating years, you will need to take these temperatures on the second, third and fourth day of your menstrual flow. Anyone else may take his or her temperature at any time for 3-4 days in a row.

Never try to determine your basal temperature during a period of time when you have an infection, inflammation, sunburn or similar stress that could possibly elevate your normal body temperature.

If you are not confident that you have gotten accurate readings on your first three attempts, continue doing this procedure for additional days or repeat again on your next menstrual cycle.

A normal reading should be between 97.8 and 98.2 degrees. If you fall below 97.8 degrees consistently, you will most likely benefit from proper thyroid treatment.

Because each case of hypothyroidism has unique causes and complications, thyroid treatment is different for everyone and each case will have varying degrees of difficulty. I am available by appointment to discuss treatment options.

