

Thyroid: How Well Is Yours Working?

by Dr. Glenn R. Hoey, ND

I believe hypo-function (low) of the thyroid is one of the most commonly missed problems in health care. So many patients with obvious (to me) symptoms of low thyroid function have never been prescribed any treatment. This is because their blood tests were "fine." Well, I differ radically from my conventional medical colleagues on thyroid function and I'll tell you why.

First of all, what does the thyroid gland do? Well, here's a brief list:

1. Regulation of body metabolism - the burning of fats to produce energy. This is the major function of the thyroid.
2. Regulation of calcium metabolism with the assistance of the parathyroid hormones
3. Assistance in immune function.

What happens when the thyroid starts to falter? Here is a list of common symptoms of low thyroid.

1. Fatigue - constant despite diet and sleep.
2. Weight gain.
3. Poor circulation - cold hands and/or feet.
4. No ambition, sluggishness, lethargy.
5. Depression.
6. Increased blood cholesterol and/or triglycerides
7. Dry Skin

As you can see, the symptoms are quite common.

What causes low thyroid function, and what is considered "low"? The thyroid gland produces essentially two hormones: T4 and T3. The main building blocks for these hormones are iodine, a trace mineral, and tyrosine, an essential amino acid. The most common source for trace minerals, like iodine, is the soil. The soil is now depleted of many trace minerals due to aggressive farming. We now add iodine to common table salt.

The cause of low thyroid hormone production is a low protein diet. Since tyrosine is an amino acid, it comes from protein. Nowadays people have cut back on consumption of animal proteins like eggs, cheese, and meat, so they get less tyrosine.

So how is it that lab reports can show that thyroid function is "fine," despite many symptoms to the contrary? Here are some very good reasons:

1. The normal range for thyroid hormone (T4) is 5-12 units. Any number in that range is considered acceptable. How about if you are at 5.2 or 5.8 or 6.1? You are deemed "fine." Even if your measured thyroid hormone was higher three years ago - and you felt better then - you are still thought to be "normal."
2. Doctors now use the TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone) test to determine thyroid function. The reasoning behind this is that the TSH is the pituitary stimulating hormone that signals the thyroid to produce thyroid hormones. Again, anywhere in the TSH range (usually .5 - 4.5 units) is fine. If the TSH is elevated above the normal range, the thyroid is thought to be under-productive. Doctors rarely measure the thyroid hormones, and the TSH is only an indirect indicator of thyroid function.

The end result is that there are lots of people with less than optimal thyroid production, feeling fatigued and depressed, who are considered normal by their doctors.

What can you do? If this is happening to you, then call us! We'll do a complete lab evaluation, including T4 and TSH, and determine the appropriate treatment. There are many conditions that mimic low thyroid, so we need to evaluate all the possibilities. If the thyroid is low by our analysis, then we'll take appropriate action. Feeling better may literally be only a phone call away. Dr. Glenn R. Hoey, ND, 519 King St., Wenatchee, WA 98801 Ph (509)662-1302