

SUMMIT

Naturopathic News

Thyroid

Dr. Justin Pollack, ND

Most cells in the body have thyroid hormone receptors, and respond to thyroid hormones T3 and T4. When T3 and T4 levels are low, body temperature plummets, and general metabolism falls along with it. Many people are familiar with the signs of low thyroid activity: **weight gain** that doesn't respond to exercise, **fatigue**, body temperature that is a degree or so low, **general chill**, **dry skin**, **hair loss**, **high cholesterol**, **sluggish thinking** and sometimes a degree of depression. There are many reasons for thyroid activity to fall, and it often accompanies the naturally decline of glandular secretions that accompanies aging.

What happens if your labs all “look normal”, but you still don't feel right?

Perhaps TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone) laboratory normals aren't low enough. In 2002 the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists suggested that the upper range for a normal TSH be lowered to 3.0 uIU/ml or below. In the last 25 years, the accepted normal upper limit for TSH has officially dropped from around 20 to 4.5 uIU/ml, which is about where local labs now have the upper limit set. Is your TSH level between 0.3 and 3.0?

Even though standard medical practice to test TSH, this may not be enough information. When everything is working the way it should, TSH is a good indicator of thyroid activity through a negative-feedback mechanism. So, when thyroid activity is low, TSH will read high because it is “stimulating the thyroid”. TSH levels could be normal, even by new standards, yet T3 or T4 levels could be low. Conversion levels to an inactive form of thyroid hormone called “reverse T3” could be high. High levels of reverse T3 are called “Wilson's syndrome”, and laboratory results are compared with basal body temperature readings.

Maybe your labs are all close to normal, but body temperature is a degree or more below 98.6 Fahrenheit. Monitoring “basal body temperature” in the morning before food or activity is a good way to assess if metabolism is low. While the results of this method are non-specific, it points to endocrine imbalance. Low body temperature could be related to low activity by the thyroid, adrenal glands and/or gonads. All these glands work in concert to keep energy levels, general metabolism, growth and nerve function at optimal levels. It is worth finding the cause of low metabolism so it can be corrected. Dr. Justin & Dr. Kim have tests available to assess adrenal hormone activity and hormone levels from the gonads, like estrogen, testosterone and progesterone.

More and more, thyroid imbalance is triggered by auto-immunity of varying degrees. In a case like this, labs like TPO (thyroid peroxidase) antibodies and anti-thyroglobulin antibodies will let us know if thyroid components have been targeted for execution by an out of whack immune system. The inflammation caused by this kind of attack can cause over-production of thyroid hormones (Grave's disease), or under-production with resulting hypothyroidism (Hashimoto's thyroiditis). Commonly, it causes swings of thyroid hormone production in both directions, and is most easily called auto-immune thyroiditis. There are often allergic triggers associated with auto-immunity. Dr. Justin and Dr. Kim

have a wide-array of allergy and sensitivity tests to get to the root cause of the immune imbalance.

The naturopathic doctors at Mountain-River Clinic are well-versed in addressing thyroid imbalances with prescription and over-the-counter medications for thyroid replacement, or thyroid support with nutrients and herbs. Both have seen success with Wilson's syndrome protocols, as well as addressing immune causes of thyroid imbalance.