FEELING FAT, FUZZY OR FRAZZLED?

The Problem Could be a HORMONAL IMBALANCE

by Richard Shames, M.D. and Karilee Shames, Ph.D.

Are you one of the millions who feel fat, fuzzy, or frazzled? Evidence is mounting that a spiraling epidemic is catching millions in its escalating whirl. If your lab tests show normal, you may be blamed for not eating right, not thinking right, or not getting enough exercise.

Fatigue, depression, weight gain, high cholesterol, low sex function, insomnia, anxiety, attention deficit, and severe menopause are common health challenges today. Yet generally, they are not the true culprit. What often lies at the heart of these various diagnoses and their hundreds of related symptoms is one underlying cause: metabolic gland imbalance. Experts concur that one in ten Americans has some degree of endocrine gland disruption, where the various glands that are supposed to work together in harmony (such as thyroid, adrenals, and sex glands) become depleted or confused, altering their hormonal output. Most people suffering with metabolic imbalance remain undiagnosed, while it slowly drains their daily joy, eroding their overall quality of life.

One major cause of this increase in energy hormone challenges is the constant stress of modern life. Our adrenals are the "fight or flight" glands that secrete excess cortisol under duress, flooding the system with biochemcials that affect our nervous system, resulting in increased anxiety and irritability. Depletion of the adrenal gland causes the thyroid gland to compensate, draining it, as well. Another reason for today's hormone disruption epidemic is environmental pollution. For example, a sensitive person whose thyroid gland is slowed due to exposure to PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) will have slowing metabolism, resulting in multiple uncomfortable symptoms. The most obvious changes include excess weight and severe fatigue.

In reality, few health challenges are more demoralizing and upsetting to people as persistent weight problems, particularly in our thin-worshipping society. Compared with other health concerns, obesity ranks foremost in frequency for various reasons. As a society, our high-fat, low-nutrient diets eaten on the run, coupled with larger portion sizes, add to our weight. In addition, the accelerating pace of life makes it exceptionally difficult to find time to exercise adequately. Moreover, many artificial hormonelike substances in our environment directly interfere with proper metabolism.

If you are overweight, you may want to consider the possibility that a metabolic imbalance is causing you those extra pounds. If the cause for your overweight is glandular, proper hormone balancing makes it much more likely that you will live longer, and more healthfully. Often people who have what we refer to as the Thyroid Hormone Endocrine Profile, or simply the Physical Endo-Type, experience a wide variety of symptoms, including fatigue, overweight, depression, dry skin, hair, and nails, as well as an intense sense of malaise, especially around puberty, menopause, or during other life changes. The majority of people in this category experience weight gain, despite normal eating habits and reasonable exercise. The thyroid functions as the "gas pedal" for the whole body by secreting energy hormones that control the speed of every metabolic process in every cell and every organ. When the thyroid slows, so do you.

Standard tests are not always able to diagnose mild metabolic glandular imbalance. One of the main difficulties is that our present medical system doesn't conduct a sufficiently comprehensive evaluation of a patient, despite the fact that the right testing could uncover the root cause of a person's suffering. The result is that regular blood tests frequently miss the problem.

Your tests may show normal, but your symptoms may be pointing you toward the truth. Unfortunately, you cannot count on your doctor to bring up the possibility of thyroid, adrenal, or sex hormonal imbalance as a likely culprit in your feeling fat, fuzzy, or frazzled.

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Most people imagine that if they were at risk for having a hormone abnormality, their doctor would tell them after running some well-chosen blood tests. But many doctors are less than fully informed about the newer diagnostic tests, or the milder yet often more effective vitamin, mineral, or herbal interventions for restoring proper function.

Please realize that we are not suggesting that you forgo any blood testing. What we are saying is that if you are having mild health concerns, for which your own physician does not recommend further evaluation, or if your blood tests have come back normal and you're still not feeling that well, you might need to take greater charge of your own health process. Saliva testing can be an excellent beginning step to help you pinpoint and correct subtle disorders, and they are relatively easy to use. Though not entirely perfect, a growing body of scientific literature confirms the validity of testing saliva for hormone levels. These tests are much more accessible, and also much more representative of a person's actual hormone status. To order this simple, low-cost home saliva test, go online to www.canaryclub.org.

Should you discover that you have low thyroid and are what we call the Physical Endo-Type, the following immediate actions are recommended.

First, change your diet. The best foods for a thyroid type are items that are high in fiber and low in calories. For many people, this ends up being somewhat of a vegetarian diet with plenty of non-animal protein sources. If your metabolism is sluggish, you want to support your intestine as it transports food through its length, which is helped by extra fiber (and slowed by meat and dairy). This type of high complex carbohydrate way of eating is similar to the diets of McDougall, Pritikin, and Ornish.

Also, since you may have sluggish metabolism, you want to satisfy your...
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urge to eat with foods that have the highest bulk, crunchiness, taste appeal, visual attractiveness, but which are low in calories. This all adds up to eating more fruits, vegetables, beans, seeds, nuts, and sprouts. To help handle the auto-immune issues related to thyroid, include plenty of avocados and olives, even though they are higher in calories.

You will also want to add certain supplements, with a focus on the key metabolic minerals. In addition to a multiple vitamin and antioxidant, you need: 200 mcg extra selenium; 200 mcg extra chromium; and 400 mg extra magnesium. Selenium is of particular importance; this one step is the key to many people’s thyroid balance, or lack thereof. Also recommended is the amino acid taurine, (taken as a 500 mg capsule on its own), and a high-quality digestive enzyme product. If your thyroid is low, your enzyme complement is liable to be low, as well.

Also worth mentioning is rosemary, an herbal remedy useful for thyroid symptoms. Rosemary is a source of carnosic acid, which is absolutely essential for thyroid hormone to do its work. Another very useful herbal medicine is withania somnifera, sometimes called ashwagandha, from the ayurvedic medicine of India. It is extremely handy for helping those with thyroid problems.

You might also consider homeopathic remedies. Thyroidinum is a low-potency single-remedy homeopathic medicine available from your health food store, which is very useful for many low-thyroid sufferers. Take three pellets in the 6x or 6c potency under the tongue three times daily for one week and then stop completely.

Suppose you are a definite physical endo-type, and you are still suffering with thyroid imbalance despite using many of the natural interventions already mentioned. You might want to consider taking actual thyroid hormone by prescription. When you need it, there is nothing like it, but it’s a prescription medicine, so you will need to be diagnosed sufficiently for a prescribing doctor to be able to offer it.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of all is the normalization of your body weight. Once your thyroid is balanced, you may finally stop that seemingly endless tendency to keep gaining. Now your food plan and your exercise program can start working as intended, so that you can obtain the results other people have received all along. It may not matter so much what diet or body movement you choose. Now that the thyroid is more balanced, it all begins to work better. So good luck in having fewer problems and more success, both of which are frequent results of proper thyroid balance.


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