



Sensible News

Issue 16, April 2004

Sensible Philosophy

Sensible News aims to provide important health information that may not be readily available from conventional sources. Articles are factual. Any references not listed are available on request.

In the News:

Women do NOT run out of eggs

Good news for women struggling with infertility, and a new positive perspective on female reproduction. Contrary to conventional medical opinion, women are not born with a set number of eggs that become depleted during child-bearing years. New evidence from mice shows that ovaries may continue to produce new eggs indefinitely under stimulation from the pituitary gland. (1)

Fruit is NOT the Healthiest Food

New research has found a link between high fruit consumption and the likelihood of Parkinson's disease (2). The cause of the link is not known, but could be related to the high sugar content, yeast, salicylates or insecticide sprays. Fruit is still MUCH healthier than junk food, sweets, or bread, but it falls far behind the incredible health benefits of vegetables, healthy oils and protein.

Appointments at Sensible-Alternative Naturopathic Clinic are available weekdays from 8am to 8pm. 498 Miller St. Cammeray

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New Guidelines for Thyroid Test

The "New Guidelines" were first announced in early 2003. One year on, pathology reports continue to use an outdated reference range for TSH.

If you suspect low thyroid function, but have had "normal" blood tests, you and your doctor may want to take a second look.

Over one year ago, the American National Academy of Clinical Biochemistry narrowed the window of normal for thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) from 0.5-5 to 0.2-2.5mIU/L. Similar revisions by the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE) meant that 13 million people previously considered to be normal, could become officially diagnosed with underactive thyroid. (3)

Untreated thyroid disease leads to elevated cholesterol levels, heart disease, infertility, muscle weakness, poor mental function, and an increased risk for cancer.

Underactive Thyroid: The Hidden Epidemic

Underactive thyroid may be the cause of as many as 40% of unexplained cases of fatigue, depression, weight gain and infertility (4),

Common Causes

Why is it so common? Like many other hormone imbalances discussed in Sensible News, low thyroid is due, in part, to our modern lifestyle. Causes include:

- Selenium deficiency (a serious problem in Australia due to low soil levels). Selenium is necessary for the conversion of T4 to T3. (Incomplete conversion results in high levels of reverse T3, an inactive hormone.)
- Estrogen dominance (see Sensible News 4) caused by stress and pollution. Estrogen suppresses thyroid function.
- Mercury contamination of the thyroid gland (5)
- Stress causing autoimmunity against the thyroid gland
- Stress causing decreased adrenal gland function

Diagnosis of Underactive Thyroid

Common symptoms of underactive thyroid include: variable fluid retention, yellow skin, sensitivity to heat or cold, fatigue, poor mental function, slowed heart rate, irregular periods, very dry skin, constipation and more.

If underactive thyroid is suspected, blood tests should not be limited to TSH. Other useful tests include thyroid auto-antibodies, free T3, free T4 and reverse T3.

One of the most sensitive tests for thyroid function can be done outside a lab. Basal body temperature (BBT) is an oral temperature taken at rest - preferably first thing in the morning before rising. Normal BBT's are 36.5C and above. (Progesterone produced after ovulation raises BBT by counteracting the thyroid-suppressing effect of estrogen.)

Although a low BBT may be due to other causes such as low adrenal hormones, it does warrant further investigation with a thyroid panel blood test.

Blood tests and in-office tests for thyroid function are available at Sensible-Alternative.

References:

- (1) Sydney Morning Herald March 12, 2004.
- (2) Journal Clinical Toxicology 2003;41(1):67-70
- (3) AACE Medical Guidelines for Clinical Practice for the Evaluation and Treatment of Hyperthyroidism and Hypothyroidism, *Endocrine Practice*, Vol. 8, No. 6, Nov/Dec 2002.
- (4) Barnes, Broda. *Hypothyroidism: The Unsuspected Illness*. 1976
- (5) Barregard L, Lindstedt G, Shutz A, et al. Endocrine function in mercury exposed chloralkali workers. *Occup Environ Med* 1994, 51 (8):536-540

Treatment

Underactive thyroid does not always require direct treatment. In many cases, correction of estrogen dominance by bio-identical progesterone is enough. (Starting progesterone may require a decrease in dose of any pre-existing thyroid medication.)

More direct Naturopathic treatment for low thyroid includes:

- Tyrosine (200mg)
- Iodine (1000mg Kelp)
- Selenium (100mcg)
- Vitamin B6 (100mg)
- Mercury detoxification
- Exercise
- Withania

Standard medical treatment for underactive thyroid is hormone supplementation. Some thyroid hormone medication, however, is better than others. This is because many people do not respond well to T4 (thyroxin) alone. Thyroxin does normalise blood tests, but it cannot relieve low thyroid symptoms until it has been converted to T3, the active hormone. Failure to make this conversion is common. (Selenium, vitamin B6 and other co-factors are required.)

Two alternative prescriptions are available:

1. T3 (Tertroxin or the much preferred, but more expensive slow-release T3) used together with T4 long term or by itself for a short term correction.
2. Thyroid Extract (desiccated thyroid) provides T3 and T4 as well as the nutrients required by the thyroid. Thyroid Extract is available by prescription from compounding chemists.

Thyroid hormone should not be used without professional advice.

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