

A Thyroid Nightmare

A Novelette

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It was the same horrible dream. Every night she was jolted from a deep sleep and had to calm herself down. Her heart rate soared to nearly 120 beats a minute. "This isn't real," Laura kept telling herself, but this unrelenting nightmare kept repeating.

Yes, it was just a dream, but just another component of a weird series of unexplained occurrences that have been happening to her over the last two years. It all started with a period of brain fog. Laura's job depended on her ability for extreme mental acuity, but now her ability to concentrate became severely compromised.

Although at the onset of her symptoms Laura was only 36, she was also starting to feel like a woman in her late 60s. Even if she had gotten eight to ten hours of sleep, she found it difficult to crawl out of bed. This, combined with her forgetfulness, her inability to concentrate, her series of bad dreams, she had to admit, something was very wrong.

The suspense of not knowing what is wrong was emotionally crippling. Laura was suffering from shortness of breath, anxiety, palpitations and hysteria. "Was she having a heart attack?"

Laura, presented a comprehensive list of her symptoms to her doctor which included the following:

- brain fog
- forgetfulness
- dizziness
- anxiety
- exhaustion (especially in the morning)
- irritability
- depression
- body aches
- constipation
- weight gain
- hair loss
- occasional rapid heart beat
- poor exercise tolerance

Laura was prescribed two medications, an anti-depressant and a drug for attention deficit disorder. Common side effects of both drugs included: nausea, dizziness, sleepiness, sexual side effects, sweating, dry mouth, nervousness, insomnia, loss of appetite, weight gain and constipation.

Laura thought to herself, "could you imagine, along with the symptoms I already have, if I took both of these?"

Laura needed a physiological detective! It was time to visit a naturopathic doctor who looks at the body from a holistic perspective.

Each morning Laura was asked to monitor her morning under arm basal metabolic temperature until the day of her visit. Over the the next five days her temperatures were:

1. 94.7
2. 95.6
3. 96.5
4. 94.8
5. 96.0

Optimally, it is preferred that temperatures should be between 97.8 and 98.6. Significant decreases may be indications of an under performing thyroid function.

“Laura, even though your vitamin D is technically within the reference range, it is, in essence extremely low at 24. The designated laboratory ranges are still archaic, as the optimal range is 50-100, with 60 and above as the most desirable.” Deficiencies in vitamin D can be a risk factor for thyroid dysfunction.”⁵

This was the perfect moment to ask the naturopath one of the puzzling questions she had listed on her notepad. “If T3 is the active hormone and T4 is considered a prohormone, why doesn’t the thyroid release more T3?”

“Great question, Laura. The answer is for the same reasons that Campbell’s puts its soup in cans instead of steaming soup bowls. It travels better and it is available when its needed.” Laura laughed at the answer, but nodded in acknowledgement.

Some of the contributing factors that may inhibit the conversion of T4 to T3 thyroid production.

- Deficiencies in selenium, zinc, iron, iodine
- Cadmium, mercury or lead toxicity
- Excessive stress
- Excess copper
- High calcium to magnesium ratio
- Excessive goitrogenic dietary elements (cruciferous, soy)
- Deficiencies in vitamins A, B-2, B-6 or B-12
- Inadequate protein intake
- High carbohydrate diet
- Blood sugar dysregulation
- Aging
- Alcohol abuse
- Chronic illness
- Low levels of vitamin D
- Inflammation
- Food or environmental sensitivities

- Dioxin or PCB exposure
- Medications such as beta blockers, birth control pills, hormone therapy or chemotherapy

Within two months Laura had her life back. She was losing weight, her brain fog had lifted, her anxiety and depression had subsided, her energy levels soared, she renewed her interest in fitness, her hair regained its youthful appearance and her husband was thrilled that he no longer was going to be jolted from a deep sleep at 4:00 a.m. in the morning.