

Constipation	Digestive problems –
Dry skin – esp. shins	Esp. burping
Dry hair or hair loss	Allergies

The challenge in dealing with low thyroid function is that our current standard laboratory test, called the TSH test, can sometimes miss cases of mild low thyroid function and many people who don't show a problem on standard lab tests may still need help to improve thyroid function. The Journal of the American Medical Association published an article on this phenomenon. Naturopathic physicians however assess thyroid function through both laboratory and clinical evaluation.

An often overlooked but related condition is Wilson's Syndrome. It is a condition where the liver is unable to convert the inactive thyroid hormone, T4, to the more active hormone, T3. T3 is the form of thyroid hormone that actually acts on the cells, so its function is crucial to how the body operates. Wilson's syndrome itself does not alter the thyroid hormone test (TSH and T4) so often goes undiagnosed. It may exist in association with true hypothyroidism but drugs prescribed to treat that condition may not entirely solve the problem. Why does Wilson's syndrome occur? One reason is that prolonged stress can cause excess adrenal hormones (cortisol) to inhibit the conversion of T4 to T3. As a result, the chemical reactions of life slow down, our bodies are colder and we gain weight more easily.

The first step in an effective weight loss program is to do a thorough evaluation of the thyroid hormones to determine if they are the root of the problem. Naturopathic physicians then routinely recommend nutritional supplements to restore normal thyroid function. As a last resort, pharmaceutical drugs are sometimes necessary and are often used in conjunction with natural medicines to prevent atrophy of the thyroid gland. When the thyroid is working well, not only do people begin to lose weight, they also feel great.

Next week's article will look at the importance of blood sugar regulation for effective weight loss.

Dr. Deidre Macdonald is a naturopathic physician practicing natural family medicine in Courtenay. She can be reached at The Macdonald Centre for Natural Medicine 897-0235 or drdmac@shaw.ca. Web site: getwellhere.com

Weight Loss and Naturopathic Medicine Part 2

By Dr. Deidre Macdonald, Naturopathic physician

Physical causes – blood sugar regulation

Blood Sugar and the Battle of the Bulge

The battle of the bulge is a war many people fight daily. With so many dieting philosophies out there, how does one decide which strategy is right? As a naturopathic doctor, I have had many patients come to see me, frustrated by their failed diet plans. In fact, some diets can set people up for cravings and bingeing. In order to lose weight and not feel too deprived at the same time, it is crucial to learn how to regulate your blood sugar.

Blood sugar problems can easily set people up for weight gain, especially fat around the abdomen. We often refer to hypoglycemia or low blood sugar, but the lows are usually the result of blood sugar fluctuations caused by the typical Western diet. The body tries to keep blood sugar within a tight range. If we eat high carbohydrate foods like sweets, breads, juices and pasta, the pancreas puts out a lot of insulin to quickly transport the glucose out of the blood into the cells. Because the human body is not intended to have such highly refined carbohydrate meals, it is confused by the onslaught of carbohydrates caused by these highly refined foods. Too much insulin is put out and the blood sugar plummets. That is when we feel the symptoms of low blood sugar such as confusion, lightheadedness and spaciness.

The brain then sends red alert signals to the adrenal glands telling them to produce adrenaline. This adrenaline rush accounts for the other hypoglycemic symptoms of shakiness, sweating, irritability, anger, heart palpitations, anxiety, insomnia and more.

Unless a person is just not eating and is running out of fuel, the most common cause of hypoglycemic symptoms is “reactive hypoglycemia”, or the crash after eating a high carbohydrate meal. Years of this pattern cause the body to have to put out excess insulin; often several times a day. The cells eventually tire of dealing with so much insulin, and insulin resistant diabetes, otherwise known as adult onset diabetes can result. The other health consequence of blood sugar imbalances is weight gain. Insulin is the hormone that

tells the body to store fuel in several ways, including storing fuel as fat. The more insulin
in