

# The Seven Steps in treating Hypothyroidism and Hashimoto's Thyroiditis

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In the last 10 years of my clinical practice, I have seen a steady rise in the diagnosis of Hypothyroidism. One in every five women has hypothyroidism and the most common cause of hypothyroidism is Hashimoto's Thyroiditis. This is a condition where the body forms antibodies against its own thyroid gland and causes inflammation. It slowly begins to chew up the thyroid gland and if it goes untreated, it will finally destroy the gland. Why is this happening? Besides the normal standard of care, which is putting patients on Synthroid, what else can be done? Why are patients who are put on Synthroid, still complaining of all the symptoms of Hypothyroidism which can range from- fatigue, brain fogginess, cold hands and feet, hair loss, depressed moods, constipation, need for naps and more?

One of the Six fundamental principles of Naturopathic Medicine, is to identify the cause of the problem and treat that rather than suppressing the symptoms. I want to share with you my Seven Step approach towards diagnosing and treating this condition.

## 1. Correct Diagnosis

Hashimoto's goes undiagnosed very commonly since the thyroid antibodies, Antithyroglobulin and Thyroid Peroxidase antibodies are not tested for. They can be easily checked via blood work when ordering the other thyroid tests, TSH, T3, T4. I always check the Free T3 and Free T4 since that is the bioavailable form. The labs give a wide range of "normal values", but we need to find out if that is "optimal values". For the patient to feel the best, their labs should fall in the optimal value ranges. Based on how high the thyroid antibodies tested, I may refer patients for a thyroid ultrasound.

## 2. Medication Management

My first choice of medication is Naturethroid. It comes from a natural source and has both T4 and T3 along with the thyroid co-factors. It is very reasonably priced compared to other brands of thyroid medications. I see much better symptom improvement in my patients when I use Naturethroid compared to synthetic thyroid medications. There are studies that show there is improved cognitive performance, lowering of BP, more energy, improved lipid levels when using desiccated thyroid medications.

## 3. Heal your Gut

In Naturopathic Medicine, we believe that disease begins in the Gastrointestinal tract (Gut). Your Gut is the seat to 80 % of your body's immunity. Since Hashimoto's is an autoimmune disorder, the health of your gut matters a lot. Leaky Gut is a problem that occurs due to Molecular mimicry. Antibodies bind to specific protein sequences of antigens. While gluten, casein and your own protein tissues may be different, they share the same protein sequences. If this reaction occurs, then your immune system cannot distinguish between tissues resulting in a "leaky Gut". This allows larger particles to go through which are usually not supposed to resulting in an autoimmune reaction.

#### **4. Check for Food Sensitivities**

A large number of people who have Hashimoto's are sensitive to Gluten. Many patients who have eliminated gluten have seen improvement in their symptoms. Some people like to follow an elimination diet which includes removing the major allergens like milk, eggs, fish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat and soybeans. I believe in doing a food sensitivity test because it will help you identify what is causing an inflammatory response for you rather than randomly removing the common allergens and be left with not many options to eat! Based on the food sensitivity result, I ask the patient to follow the rotation diet plan for 90 days and after that begin introducing one food each week and look for symptoms. If you notice a strong reaction to a food after you have re-introduced it 90 days later then I recommend avoiding it.

#### **5. Balancing your Adrenals**

The Adrenal glands sit on the top of the kidneys and produce the stress hormone, cortisol besides a few more hormones. Cortisol levels should be highest in the morning and gradually decline by evening and night. Stress can cause the adrenal function to decline. There are 3 stages of stress. I use the Adrenal Stress Index which is a saliva based test to check for cortisol levels. People who have Hypothyroidism, may have adrenal insufficiency as well. Thus, when I balance the adrenal function, I see much better improvement in hypothyroid symptoms.

#### **6. Removing Toxins/Heavy Metals**

It is practically impossible to live without being exposed to heavy metals/toxins since they are present everywhere. Glyphosate is a broad-spectrum herbicide which affects the endocrine system, GI bacteria balance, causes DNA damage leading to cancer mutations. PCB's cause brain impairment. Phthalates, which are present in fragrances, cause thyroid abnormalities. Avoiding this exposure is nearly impossible, therefore we do the best we can by making better choices. Use a HEPA filter to clean the air, use a water filter system. Make organic food choices as much as possible. The liver is the organ that helps detoxification, and we can support it with herbs like Milk Thistle, Intravenous glutathione, N-Acetyl-Cysteine (glutathione precursor) and Vitamin C.

#### **7. Correcting Nutrient deficiencies**

Many different vitamins, minerals and antioxidants play a vital role in thyroid functioning. Selenium is required to convert the T4 to T3 hormone which is a very important step in the thyroid hormone synthesis as our cells utilize the T3 hormone to produce energy. Glutathione, an important antioxidant gets depleted in people with hypothyroidism. B vitamins play an essential role in thyroid hormone production. I like to order a micronutrient test which is a thorough test looking for the levels of individual vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Based on the result, I am able to correct nutrient deficiencies in my patients and personalize their treatments.

Thus, all of you who suffer from hypothyroidism and Hashimoto's thyroiditis who are not feeling optimal on your current treatments, I encourage you to look into finding the cause of your problem.