



THE ENDOCRINE SYSTEM:

SPOTLIGHT ON THYROID AND ADRENALS

The most common thing I work with on a daily basis is adrenal exhaustion and thyroid dysfunction, reflective of our busy and hyper-multitasking times. Even we, here in our quiet, small, yet overachieving town, are susceptible to burnout and feelings of exhaustion, overwhelm, and fatigue. The most susceptible of our population: new mothers and fathers.

Our endocrine system is made up of the pituitary, thyroid, parathyroid, adrenal, and pancreas as well as the ovaries and testes, according to the Mayo Clinic. The Merck manual states that the endocrine system affects every organ and cell in the body. The endocrine system is a system that needs to be nurtured, nourished, and balanced. The endocrine system can be depleted by stress, lack of minerals and vitamins, and adolescence, pregnancy and menopause (during hormone changes), infection, injury, as well as excessive exercise.

“Don’t ask what the world needs, ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

—Dr. Howard Thurman

The thyroid is a small but mighty gland that sits on the front of the neck. It is also the “master gland” that affects every cell in our body. The thyroid impacts vital body functions such as heart rate, body temperature, growth, fertility, and digestion. “The thyroid gland is the body’s master metabolic control center,” says Cindy Samet, a chemistry professor at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. “Brain, heart, and kidney function, as well as body temperature, growth, and muscle strength—and much more—are at the mercy of thyroid function.” When the thyroid isn’t functioning optimally, fatigue, anxiety, depression, feeling cold, weight gain, allergies, and malaise can set in.

The thyroid needs to be approached thoughtfully. Not only do we need to nourish it properly, we need to detoxify it properly, identifying what could be blocking its normal functioning metabolically, or emotionally. Nutrients critical for thyroid health are vitamin B1, selenium, iodine, and zinc. The thyroid is a sensitive gland and can be vulnerable to heavy metals, viral infections, toxicity, and radiation. Oftentimes, thyroid panels come back seemingly completely normal and “within range” medically, but the person still has all the symptoms of thyroid dysfunction. In these cases, there is oftentimes toxicity inhibiting thyroid metabolism, which can be quickly tested and corrected. This is a common oversight when working with thyroid health, and often misunderstood.

Emotionally, the thyroid is related to feelings of “powerlessness,” or feeling unable to speak or communicate clearly. It is related to the 5th chakra of clear and kind expression and communication. Oftentimes, if there is thyroid imbalance and dysfunction, there is an early childhood emotional stress relating to these feelings of powerlessness, perfectionism, or hopelessness. The thyroid is also affected by viral infection. A common viral infection that attacks the thyroid is Epstein-Barr Virus.

The adrenals are responsible for sustained energy throughout the day, feelings of well being, fluid balance in the colon, and therefore proper elimination, and holding a proper electrolyte balance in our systems. The adrenals can become exhausted under times of extreme stress, leaving us reactive, overwhelmed,

and making bad decisions. Nutrients for adrenal support are B vitamins, magnesium, healthy salt, and vitamin C. Adrenals can also be supported with adaptogenic herbs, which are herbs that support healthy immunity, well being, balance, and energy. Rhodiola, maca, ashwaganda, and American ginseng are all adaptogenic herbs that I use in my practice. Adaptogens can be either stimulating, or balancing and calming; they are amazing support for stress and well being. Each individual person will test for different support, and an individual assessment taking in to consideration constitutional type, metabolism, and cellular metabolism is essential.

The two glands combined can give you the spark of life and energy, radiance, and well being. However, we must note that no amount of vitamins, minerals, and herbs can be a substitute for a balanced life, sufficient sleep, time for yourself, exercise, healthy food, meditation, and movement practices as well as positive, productive life work, and relationships. As we move in to a time of collaboration and support, we can lessen the impact of feeling alone, overly stressed, out of alignment, and anxious and depressed with these tools of balance, calm, alignment, and proper communication and proper personal expression.

As always, we want to approach health from a holistic approach of proper nutrition, sleep, balance, support, emotions, and livelihood. Specifically with these two glands of energy, immunity, and well being we need to consider a holistic approach. It is up to us as individuals to be sparks of light and inspiration for each other, to support and inspire each other on a daily basis for our own personal well being, that of our community, and our world as a whole. In this way, we can tap into a healthy web of interconnectedness that is surely a shift in consciousness that we are welcoming in.



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