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Live Well

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WOODSIDE

FEELING TIRED? THE HIDDEN CAUSES OF FATIGUE

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The incidence of fatigue in the United States is reaching epic proportions. Many individuals suffering from fatigue are reluctant to inform their physicians simply because they feel there is no "cure." As the awareness of natural healthcare rises, more and more of these individuals are seeking out their alternative medicine practitioners for relief. In my practice, I would estimate that well over half of my patients complain of some form of generalized fatigue. Most people that live with fatigue accept it as part of their lives. The simple fact is that after many physicians rule out some of the more serious pathologies associated with fatigue, they give up on an adequate diagnosis, and may label the patient as having "chronic fatigue syndrome."

The good news is that most cases of fatigue have identifiable causes. Sometimes it can take time to properly pinpoint them, and in many situations multiple factors play a role. Some commonly overlooked causes of fatigue include impaired liver function/toxin build up, poorly

functioning digestive tract, Candida (yeast) overgrowth, low thyroid or adrenal function, and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Fatigue may be due to something as simple as lack of quality of sleep, or may involve several of the previously mentioned factors.

Impaired liver function

Over time, exposure to pesticides, additives, environmental pollutants, poor diet, and heavy metals place a large burden on our liver's ability to detoxify our bodies. Among many other health conditions, this may lead to long-standing fatigue. Since standard blood work performed in most physicians' offices is more indicative of severe liver damage, a "liver clearance test" or personal health history may be necessary to adequately assess liver function.

Poorly functioning digestive tract

As many may be aware, a variety of disturbances in health may be directly linked to poor digestion. Every cell in our bodies depends on adequate nutrition attained from proper digestion. A syndrome known as "leaky gut" is the inability of the lining of the intestinal tract to filter out potentially dangerous particles, and may lead to increased food sensitivities and fatigue.

Candida overgrowth

Candida is a type of yeast that populates many of our digestive tracts. It thrives on simple sugars consumed

in the diet. Candida infection may lead to symptoms such as gas, bloating, headaches, and allergies in addition to fatigue.

Hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism, or low thyroid function, is estimated to affect 40% of our older population. The condition is widely under diagnosed, due to the reliance on standard blood tests as the primary screening tool. A complete thyroid assessment should always include a basal body temperature measurement. The thyroid gland regulates metabolism, and lower levels of circulating hormone may be the cause of fatigue, weight gain, brittle hair, constipation, dry skin, and depression.

Hypoadrenalism

The adrenal gland secretes a hormone called cortisol. Cortisol is responsible in regulating immune function, blood sugar levels, and our sleep-wake cycle. When we wake up in the morning, our cortisol levels are at their highest. As the evening progresses, the levels subside until sleep. This is part of the reason we feel tired at night and more alert during the day. Cortisol is also released in response to stressful situations. In our modern day, fast-paced society it is easy to see why people would have over-worked adrenal glands. Increased stress and lack of sleep over many years' time may "burn out" the adrenal gland and cause daily fatigue.

Hypoglycemia

The control mechanisms that regulate blood sugar can be stressed due to consuming a diet high in simple

carbohydrates (white bread, refined pasta, sweets, chips, etc.). Every time we eat a meal, our blood sugar levels rise. In response to this, a hormone called insulin is secreted by the pancreas, which brings down the sugar levels. The problem with eating simple carbohydrates is that they spike our blood sugar to very high levels. Large amounts of insulin are then secreted which bring the blood sugar level way down, below normal. Over time this virtual roller coaster ride of blood sugar levels can promote headaches, fatigue, nervousness, depression, and poor memory. If one experiences any of these symptoms when missing a meal, hypoglycemia should be suspected.

Now that the causes of fatigue have been explored, the question that comes to mind is, "What can I do about it?" The good news is that natural therapeutics works extremely well at controlling common causes of fatigue. A comprehensive treatment plan involving the use of nutrition, vitamin therapy, botanical medicine, homeopathy, and natural hormone replacement therapy will result in significant improvement of fatigue in most cases. Seeking out a health care practitioner knowledgeable in preventive medicine will help determine the appropriate course of action for you. It is important to note that fatigue may be caused by more serious conditions and should be evaluated by your physician. ::



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