

Removing the Road Blocks to Weight Loss

There is nothing more frustrating and deflating than following a well designed weight loss and lifestyle plan and still not being able to shed those extra pounds. This seems to be a very common trend in our society today. Endless streams of popular diets make well meaning claims to entice us into forking over thousands of dollars to achieve thinner versions of ourselves. The rules have changed and this is no longer enough. The culprits that leave us enslaved to spare tires and muffin tops are not just poor diet and lack of exercise, although these certainly contribute to the process. The biggest road blocks are our hormones, namely cortisol, insulin, thyroid, estrogen and progesterone. Stress is an unavoidable fact of life. Fortunately we have physiologic systems in place to help us cope in our response to stress. When our bodies are under stress, our adrenal glands produce hormones in order for us to respond to stress. The adrenal glands or stress glands produce the hormones cortisol and DHEA which create the short and long term hormone responses. The adrenals also produce adrenalin which stimulates the instant stress hormone response otherwise known as "fight or flight". Cortisol is produced in response to chronic stress. This culprit is a major contributor to belly fat as it wreaks havoc on our insulin levels and sends messages to the body to store more fat around the mid section.

Insulin resistance is becoming a major epidemic in North America with over 60% of the population facing this metabolism robber. The job of insulin is to process sugar in the bloodstream and carry it into cells to be used. The sugar is then either used for an immediate fuel source, stored in the liver or muscles for a later energy source. If all the storage sites are already full, then it is stored as fat. Not only does too much insulin encourage your body to store unused glucose as fat but it also blocks the use of stored fats as an energy source. For these reasons, an abnormally high insulin level makes losing fat, especially around the mid section, very challenging!

An imbalanced thyroid is another major contributor to a sluggish metabolism. Responsible for regulating our metabolism, the thyroid is a very common underlying cause of several annoying symptoms that can be easily regulated. Symptoms such as weight gain, high cholesterol, cold intolerances, hair loss, dry skin, constipation, depression, menstrual irregularity and many more can be an indication of a low functioning thyroid. This condition affects approximately 1 in 13 people making it a well known roadblock to weight loss.

Of course this journey would not be complete if we did not examine the effects of those female hormones on our metabolism. There is a dance that goes on between estrogen and progesterone throughout the cycle. One missed step and the body can dramatically falter. A progesterone deficiency can cause a noticeable slowing of the metabolism and send the body into what is called "estrogen dominance." Estrogen dominance simply means that you have too much estrogen in your system compared to the normal amounts of progesterone needed to oppose or balance. This is very common in 30 to 40 year old females and males. When estrogen is not balanced by progesterone, it can

produce weight gain, headaches, moodiness and a long list of symptoms that can be corrected.

To uncover your roadblocks to weight loss and optimal health consider getting a complete hormone panel including estrogen, progesterone, all thyroid hormones (TSH, T4 and T3), cortisol (this should be tested 4 times over the course of a day through saliva) and blood sugar/insulin levels.

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