

A "Weighty" Issue of American Health - Part 4

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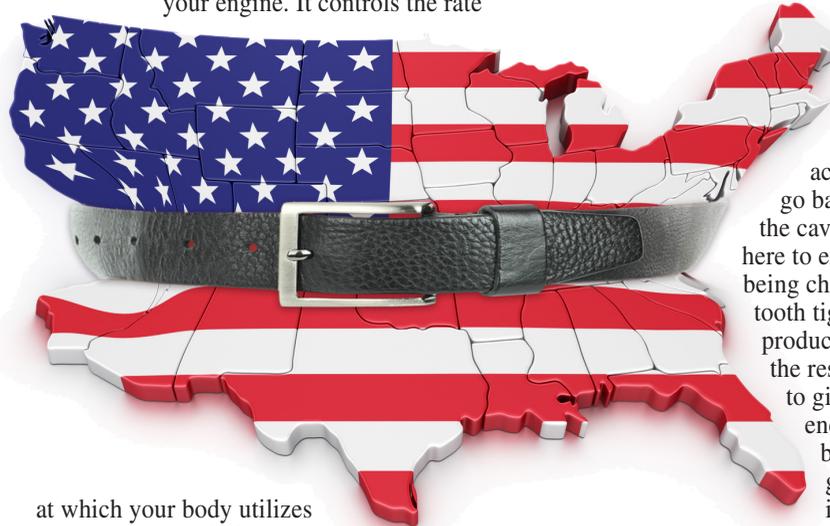
If you've been following our series on the issues of obesity and American health, you know that obesity has become an epidemic for the old, the young, and those that fall in between. Diabetes is one of the major health risks and outcomes of obesity AND sugar is most definitely not our friend. As you are beginning to discover, the issues of weight gain and the impact on health is multi-faceted, may be complicated, and not as simple as calories in and calories out.

There are individuals who feel they are doing everything right- eating a healthy, balanced diet consisting of whole foods that are low in sugar and high in nutrients. They are exercising on a consistent basis, at least 3-4 times a week. Yet they still struggle with shedding the extra pounds. Despite doing "all the right things", they might not feel so great. On the flip side, there are those who feel so tired that the idea of exercising seems nearly impossible and struggle on a daily basis to make the right food choices despite knowing what they should be doing. These two different groups of people may be suffering from the same issue of hormone imbalances.

There is no other way to say it, hormones are complicated and very interdependent of each other. This means when one changes and becomes imbalanced, often another is affected as well. It is rare for imbalances to occur in isolation.

There are A LOT of hormones our bodies utilize to do many different things but there are 2 key players to consider when it comes to struggles with weight: thyroid hormones and stress hormones, specifically cortisol.

Think of the thyroid and its hormones like your engine. It controls the rate



at which your body utilizes energy (aka metabolism) among many other things.

Hypothyroidism or a low functioning thyroid can cause symptoms of weight gain, fatigue, brain fog, constipation, dry skin, thinning hair, muscle aches and pains, depression, menstrual irregularities and elevated lipid levels. Hashimoto's thyroiditis or autoimmune thyroid disease is the most common cause of hypothyroid. The risk of

developing it increases with age and is 5 times more common in women than men. When the thyroid is not functioning properly, it can throw a lot of other systems out of balance.

Then we have our stress hormones. Cortisol is your primary "stress" hormone. Produced

in the adrenal glands, it's released when the body is under what it perceives as an acute stressor. Let's go back to the days of the caveman a little bit here to explain. You are being chased by a saber tooth tiger so your body produces cortisol to tell the rest of your systems to give you as much energy as possible because you're going to need it! More sugar is released from

storage into your blood to give you that extra energy needed. This is an oversimplification but you get the point and when this occurs on a short term, infrequent basis, everything remains in balance. The problem lies in the fact that in our "modern day life", chronic stress is the more common scenario which means chronic, higher than normal levels of cortisol. This constant

release of cortisol and energy resources, when it's not actually needed, can lead to weight gain as well as several other health issues.

To add insult to injury, when you are continually pumping out stress hormones, your thyroid is going to inherently slow down its production to protect itself. It doesn't want to burn out the engine. So now you are not only tired from the stress hormones becoming imbalanced, but your thyroid is going on strike AND you begin to gain weight to boot. Remember when I said hormones were complicated? Our sex hormones, estrogen, testosterone, and progesterone are also frequently involved in this tangled web.

So what do you do if you suspect you may have some hormone imbalances? Eat a healthy, balanced diet, get lots of sleep, move your body daily and consider having your hormone levels assessed. The doctors at True Health Medicine are well trained at evaluating hormones and helping you untangle this messy web to rediscover a place of balance and health.



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