

Tests that won't Fail You



Health Matters

By Kerry Sauser

Spring has us on the go with gardening, proms, graduation and the like. We all want to be at our best for the big-and small-events in our lives, but many of us actually operate beneath our peak. We may feel fatigued, have a little trouble with our digestion or tire very easily when we exert ourselves. Yet, our standard check-ups show that there's nothing wrong with us. We then attribute our symptoms to age, bad habits, or our imagination, but in truth, there may be a reason for our symptoms.

From a functional medicine standpoint, the transition between good and bad health is not as black and white as it appears from the results of a typical check-up. Rather, functional medicine sees the transition from good to poor health as a graduation of grays ranging from white to black. Conditions like fatigue and poor digestion fall into the grey zone—they are not yet described as disease, but most certainly are not signs of optimum health. It has been observed that "gray zone" symptoms can, over time, progress into the chronic diseases that our check-ups do finally detect: cardio-vascular disease, depression, diabetes, arthritis, cancer and others. The good news? Conditions that are addressed while they still are in the "grey zone" can

often be improved or reversed by proper nutrition, exercise and other lifestyle changes. More good news? These types of changes are relatively easy and inexpensive when compared to the cost and effort required to treat the chronic diseases they may evolve into.

The trick then, is to determine the specific causes of grey zone symptoms so that they can be addressed. That is not always easy because such symptoms can be caused by numerous factors. Fatigue for example,

can be caused by anemia, sleep apnea, nutrient deficiencies, poor metabolism, hormone imbalances, infections, food intolerances, too much caffeine, or undiagnosed heart disease—to name a few. Traditional medical testing can narrow the possibilities, but the functions within the human body are so complex that it can be quite difficult to hone in on precise causes of grey zone conditions without specialized tools. Thanks to science, those specialized tools are available.

Within the last 20 years, extremely accurate testing has been developed that can quantify a person's nutrition, hormone levels, digestion/absorption function and inflammatory response—the "grey zone" conditions. What is exciting about these tests is that they enable a health care practitioner to provide exacting recommendations regarding diet, supplementation, and activity that can produce positive health results in a relatively short amount of time. That means a person does not have to go about feeling "not quite right" until (s)he is actually sick enough to be treated. Rather, recommendations based on test results can be implemented to significantly improve quality of life and eliminate the expense that might have been incurred to treat a more serious chronic disease.

Here are a few of the types of the new generation tests now available and their uses:

Saliva Testing for hormone levels. With an accuracy of 92-96 percent, saliva testing detects certain hormone levels more accurately than blood tests. Unlike hormones in blood, which are bound and unavailable for the body's

use, hormones in saliva are unbound (or free) and can be precisely measured to determine the amount of hormone actually available for body processes. Besides being precise, saliva testing is safe, non-invasive (no needles), convenient, and stable. Samples are viable for several weeks—allowing collection over time to evaluate fluctuating hormone levels. This method is most often used to test female, male and stress hormones, but it can also be used to test bone health

and GI disorders.

Blood Testing for nutrition, digestion or inflammatory response. Most of us are familiar with the concept of blood testing, but these new generation tests are used to evaluate information not typically collected like: Antioxidant levels, B-vitamins, Digestive function, Essential Fatty Acids, Minerals and sensitivity to food or environmental substances. Some tests examine 40+ components from a single sample, resulting in very comprehensive data. This data is totally unique to the person tested and can be used to create individualized recommendations regarding specific supplementation and lifestyle changes.

Urine Testing for metabolic factors and functional deficiencies. Urine testing checks for deficiencies in vitamins, minerals, protein utilization, toxic element exposure and some hormones. It is safe and non-invasive, so it works well for children. Urine testing can be an aid in diagnosing conditions related to metabolism such as fatigue, behavioral problems and depression.

Stool Sampling is informative when working with gastro-intestinal disorders. This test type efficiently analyzes digestion, absorption, gut flora, the environment of the colon and checks for the presence of parasites. It also indicates pancreatic function. Stool tests can be used to evaluate most chronic digestive problems or bowel changes, and is non-invasive.

Breath Testing is not just for checking alcohol levels. It is also used to detect bacteria overgrowth in the small intestines and

lactose intolerance.

Hair Testing is used to detect heavy metal toxicity and mineral patterns that relate to cellular-level hormone patterns. Because a testing lab's handling methods can affect test results, use of a reliable lab is imperative. When performed properly however, this inexpensive, simple test produces accurate results and can provide indications of disease patterns years in advance of actual disease onset.

Health care professionals often use these new generation tests in combination to allow for cross-referencing and increased accuracy in diagnosis. And though these tests are not usually part of a routine check-up, they are considered to be main stream; Medicare and insurance companies provide reimbursement for a number of them. So, if you want to be free from the "grey zone" of less-than-optimum health, investigate the new generation of health tests with your health care professional. You can't fail with these tests!

Until next month... Heal well, be well...naturally!

K.S.

PS. If you'd like additional information on testing, visit www.gdx.net or www.diagnostechs.com.

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