Basal Temperature Test for Hypothyroidism

Before beginning hypothyroidism treatment it's important to get an accurate diagnosis. Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) often goes unsuspected and undetected. As much as 40% of the population may be suffering from hypothyroidism because it is frequently undetected by conventional blood tests, which is the most common medical procedure used.

Using “Barnes basal temperature test” to diagnose hypothyroidism is what many enlightened practitioners advise. This test is named after the late Dr. Broda Barnes of Connecticut who created it. Dr. Barnes spent 44 years in both university labs and private practice studying hypothyroidism and published more than 100 scientific papers on this subject. He also wrote a comprehensive book entitled *Hypothyroidism: The Unsuspected Illness* about his discoveries, if you'd like to learn more about it.

In his studies, he found patients where even though their thyroid blood test and physical examination of the thyroid was within normal limits, still exhibited clear-cut hypothyroid symptoms. He concluded that the most accurate assessment of thyroid function is obtained by evaluating one's metabolic rate, as exhibited in the basal body temperature and the resting pulse rate.

A temperature and pulse that consistently runs low may be an indication of hypothyroidism. Generally a pulse running 65 or below indicates lower thyroid function. The normal basal body temperature runs between 97.8 and 98.2 degrees Fahrenheit. A temperature running below 97.6 indicates the possibility of low thyroid function.

The Barnes basal temperature test is a simple, do-it-yourself test that you can do at home. It is accurate and requires nothing more than an oral thermometer. Here’s what you do:

- At bedtime shake down a Basal thermometer to 94 degrees Fahrenheit and place it on the nightstand, within easy reach. You can buy these at any drug store. The glass type are best if you can find them.
- When you wake up in the morning, (before you get out of bed take the thermometer and place it securely under your armpit. (This is the most accurate way of checking the body's metabolic rate).
- **Hold the basal thermometer in place for 10 minutes** and then write down what the thermometer reads. During the 10 minutes you're waiting, take your pulse for one full minute and record what this result is also.
- Do this exact procedure each morning for 5 days. Make sure you do not get up to go to the bathroom or anything else. It must be done before you have any activity.
You must be in bed for a minimum of two hours before reading your temperature and the reading will not be accurate if you move around or get up.

- Do not use an electric blanket or other electrical devices in your bed. Do not sleep on a waterbed to perform this test. A waterbed will elevate your temperature artificially.

- It has also been found that a woman’s body temperature varies with the different phases of her menstrual cycle. The second and third days of her menstrual cycle are when the most accurate/reliable temperature can be found. Therefore, it is recommended that you make note on your records with red pen on the days you were menstruating and make sure you perform your test during this week.

How to interpret the readings:

If your basal temperature consistently runs below 97.8 or your pulse runs below 65, you may have hypothyroidism. Take your results to a competent health care provider who is knowledgeable with the Barnes basal technique and discuss your findings and treatment options with them.

As a first step, supplementing the diet with iodine has been found effective for some people when the root cause is iodine deficiency, but you want to be careful not to take too much too quickly or that is not good for the thyroid either. Iodine deficiency can be the root cause of hypothyroidism, but too much iodine can result in hyperthyroidism. Dosages should be introduced and increased slowly.

- Supplementing the diet with tyrosine can address hypothyroidism as well, when the root cause is a tyrosine deficiency.
- Selenium is another important nutrient needed for a properly functioning thyroid and a deficiency in selenium can be at the root of hypothyroidism. When that is the case, supplementation with selenium can improve the health of the gland. As mentioned a variety of times throughout this site, eating a diet rich in protein is important for all conditions including the thyroid.

Supplementing with thyroid hormone:

Hypothyroidism treatment with a natural thyroid preparation is available only from your physician, and rather than a synthetic drug, is the most common treatment for most people with hypothyroidism. The thyroid produces two hormones, one is T3 and the other is T4. Synthetic drugs like Synthroid only contain T4. T4 is converted by the body into T3, but for many people the body can't adequately make this conversion. Natural thyroid, such as that found in Armour thyroid or from a compounding pharmacy, is derived from porcine and it contains both T3 and T4 and is easier for the body to synthesize.

Reprinted from the work of Broda O. Barnes, MD and Mark Starr, MD
Again, working with a knowledgeable health care provider is always advised. Thyroid problems are a very complex issue with a variety of potential causes. The causes may vary from person to person. It’s important to uncover the causes in your situation, because using a supplement or approach that does not fit your unique circumstance can actually be counterproductive and produce more symptoms.