

Low Blood Sugar And How To Deal With The Effects.

Do you wake in the morning feeling like a grump? Does your energy fade out in the early afternoon? Does a high carbohydrate diet rebound on you making you feel ill? Do you get headaches and fuzzy thinking two hours after eating a high sugar content food?

If the answer to these questions is “yes”, then you may be experiencing functional hypoglycemia. For many years, traditional medicine has called this a fad disease. The reason for this is that the patient usually presents the diagnosis as a fate accompli telling the physician that is what they have. The problem is that it is supposed to be the other way round, the doctor is supposed to make the diagnosis.

However, over the past few years, functional hypoglycemia has been integrated in to the list of acceptable diagnoses.

What is functional hypoglycemia? In order to understand the condition I will present a simplified explanation of carbohydrate metabolism. There are some very interesting recent theories contributing to the understanding of diabetes, but these will only serve to confuse the issue.

When you eat some sugar or starch, there is a messenger system that starts in the stomach that tells the insulin producing cells in the pancreas that there is a carbohydrate load of x grams to be dealt with, where x is the amount of carbohydrate you have just ingested. In a healthy person, the pancreas produces the appropriate amount of insulin to deal with that amount of carbohydrate. Insulin is the substance that allows the various cells and tissues in the body to import sugar in the form of glucose, without insulin, there would be a buildup of sugar in the blood stream which would not be able to enter the cells, thereby providing food for energy. The brain cells depend entirely on glucose for food, other substances cause brain malfunction.

In the person with functional hypoglycemia, there is an exaggerated insulin response. It is as though the pancreas panics and sends out too much insulin to deal with the carbohydrate load. The problem with this is that there is a massive absorption of glucose by the tissues which can leave the brain cells short of glucose. This causes a brain malfunction. The brain cells try to find other sources of nutrition, none of which allow normal brain function. The best analogy is that it is like trying to drive a high performance racing car on diesel fuel, it just doesn't work.

The symptoms I outlined in the first few sentences of this article are the typical symptoms of functional hypoglycemia. There is a very good blood test to determine whether a person has functional hypoglycemia. When the amount of glucose available to the brain is too low for normal brain function the brain cells are under stress, causing the release of stressor hormones, such as cortisol and growth hormone factor. If a glucose tolerance test is performed, in conjunction with levels of cortisol, or growth hormone factor, if a low sugar reading in the blood test is associated with a rise in either cortisol or growth hormone factor, one can interpret the low reading as diagnostic of hypoglycemia, because it means the brain cells are being stressed by the low level of available sugar.

The management of this condition is relatively simple, but takes some discipline. I tell my patients that the changes in metabolism to correct the problem will take about a month, and during that time they may undergo some major emotional changes.

The process I use is to advise the daily food intake to be divided into five equal portions. There is to be no refined sugar or flour in the diet, no alcohol; alcohol is a sugar, no caffeine, and to assist the process, the addition of glucose tolerance factor, a substance found in brewer's yeast which helps to stabilize the metabolism of carbohydrate.

After sticking to this regime for a month, there should be a noticeable change in energy and the diminution of the symptoms. After about six months on this process, it may be possible to occasionally "cheat" by having the rare sugar treat. However, most of the time it is not worth causing a return of the symptoms just for a treat.