Hashimoto’s And Pregnancy: How To Thrive Before, During, And After Baby Transcript

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Introduction and Rachel Hillu2019s Advocacy Work

Rachel Hill is the multi-award winning thyroid patient advocate, author, speaker and content creator behind The Invisible Hypothyroidism. Her advocacy work includes writing articles, authoring books, producing her thyroid family email newsletters, appearing on TV, radio, podcasts, and speaking at events about the many aspects of thyroid disease and how to navigate it.

She is a well recognized as a crucial and influential contributor to the thyroid patient community, and has a large social media presence. Her bestselling books include Be Your Own Thyroid Advocate, Me and hypothyroidism, and the children's book that I love, Thyroid Superhero.

She's currently writing her fourth book. I served on the American College of Thyroid Allergy with her for a brief time, and I am so excited. She's here to share her journey of pain to purpose today with you all, and inspire so much hope for healing.

Rachel, thank you so much for taking the time to be here today and really talk through your journey, your thyroid journey of really transforming your pain to purpose.

Not dissimilar from my own story, and I love how you've taken your journey, and now you use it to help so many other people with your advocacy and your books.

And I'm just really, really grateful you're here today to share your journey. So thanks. Thanks for being here. I'm really late. And you, the UK, so I appreciate it.

It is late, but I felt like this was a really important conversation to have for so many reasons. It really, really is. I want you to take people back to the beginning of your journey, like I always so often think of mine too when I'm talking with patients.

But take me back to the very beginning of your experience with Hashimoto's, with hypothyroidism. Tell me a little bit about what life looked like for you back then.

Oh, okay. Where to begin? I mean, I feel like for a lot of people, there's this familiar story that you look back and you see signs and symptoms from, like a very long time ago, not just a few years before diagnosis.

So, yeah, for me as a child, I was, like, chronically fatigued. I have these unexplained muscle aches and pains. It's embarrassing to talk about, but I think we need to talk about it.

I was, like, chronically constipated as a child, you know, I would not possible movement for two, three weeks. It was. There were these, I guess, warning signs that there was probably something going on a side side issue, gut issues, various things, that were kind of piling up in it.

It really it really sped up when I got to 16 years old. And I had swine flu, which was, you know, the big the big around the health story going around, back in 2009.

Early Symptoms and Delayed Diagnosis

And after that point, my health really was never the same. So that fatigue really increased my periods got really troublesome. The muscle aches and pains got more intense at that point.

I started to get migraines. And, about a year and a half later, I then landed up in hospital with another kind of unexplained form of, they said exotic flu.

Never got to the bottom of what that was. We ruled a lot of the things out, like EBV and various things. But essentially I was so unwell that I continued to decline and ended up in the ICU.

I had pneumonia, I was on breathing support, and I was just in a really bad place. And I spent my 18th birthday, and, I came out, I had to go through rehabilitation for walking and various, like, physical impacts that that had on me.

And again, from that point, it was those health complaints were ramped up even more. And between them. So between the ages of 18 and 22, so roughly sort of 4 or 5 years, those unexplained symptoms or these sort of separate health conditions that I was told I had, just kept mounting up.

So obviously for some depression and anxiety in there, acid reflux, hair loss, eczema, my periods would go from being regular but super heavy to being lighter, but then all over the place and completely unpredictable.

They were just so thrown completely out of whack. I had brittle hair, brittle nails, my eyebrows were falling out. My weight would go up and down, all of the obvious signs of a thyroid condition.

But it took until I was 22 to be diagnosed when I'd had those signs throughout childhood. But my health had really not been the same since I was 1617.

So a good five years or so. And that was a really rough time. But in the same way, I'm aware that so many people go undiagnosed for so much longer. So I'm just grateful.

I'm grateful that it was only five years, which sounds ridiculous to say, but we know. We know the extent that a lot of people can wait for that diagnosis.

Right? So totally. Yeah, that's that's where it began for me. And then I was diagnosed, started on live, I thought, and, yeah. And then then begins a whole new chapter, of of my, yeah, my thyroid health journey.

Yeah. Wow. And I mean, I obviously in America. Right. Like we are system struggles. It's all lack of diagnosis writing people off levothyroxine treatment only.

But I hear from so many of my followers that it's even worse in the UK. Like it's just really, really challenging to be heard, acknowledged and then actually treated successfully.

Yeah, yeah, I mean, I, I'm immensely grateful to have the National Health Service here. The NHS is a brilliant resource for for a lot of more, I guess, like, simplistic issues and, and emergency treatment.

It's brilliant. A lot of people would be able to get the support they need without it. But when you have something else going on that requires further testing, or you're not one of these people that just responds to a first line treatment option, that's when it starts to get, less helpful.

There's there are a lot less options for for testing, for treatment available in that way. And thyroid issues. I guess this isn't just a UK, a UK only viewpoint as well, but thyroid issues here are perceived as being very easy to treat.

You take this one pill a day, it resolves everything. Yeah. So yeah, coming up against that when I was initially diagnosed, now as I'm leaving Fox and for 5 or 6 months and my health continued to decline, I got to a point where I could basically not really remain in work anymore.

I had a job, but I wasn't attending for 3 or 4 days. Of the five, I should have been a week. I couldn't get out of bed. I felt like I had the flu, like a terrible flu constantly.

And my now husband, who I've been with since I was 16, so obviously he's seen that crazy health journey. At the time. Again, I was in my early 20s. He was having to help me to get to the toilet, help me to undress and get in the shower.

It's. We felt like we were 18, 90 year old couple. It was insane. Looking back, at just just such a poor state of health I was in, even though I was on this medication that I was told, you know, the phrase, it was a gold standard and I was only having my cash tested and as we know, there's so much wrong with that way of looking at and treating a manager, managing and monitoring hypothyroidism.

But yeah, I just continue to stay sick. I continually got worse, extra symptoms added on. And then essentially my, my whole life just kind of crumbled social life, personal life, relationships, work life, everything fertility, everything was was impacted.

Yeah. It's it's that foundation. You know, my story was very similar to yours. And I often tell my patients even now it's like, look, if I didn't have someone that gave me my life back, I'd be on disability.

Like I would be a non functioning member of society. And meanwhile society and medicine alike kind of look like thyroid. Look at thyroid problems. Like they're not a big deal. And they are and that's why we're all here today, right?

I want to dig in a little bit. So I know you had Hashimoto's and hypothyroidism and I said had Hashimoto's. So we'll dig into that in a moment. But can you talk through people who might not know the difference and understand that there are two different entities?

Can you give them like a basic, understandable rundown of of each? Yeah. So a lot of people are confused, when they hear people kind of interchangeably use Hashimoto's and hypothyroidism.

A very simple way of looking at it is that Hashimoto's is an autoimmune condition, that essentially causes your immune system to mistakenly attack your thyroid gland.

So that's one condition that you can have. Hypothyroidism is essentially the result of that. So you can have Hashimoto's without hypothyroidism if it's not progressed to that point.

You can have hypothyroidism without Hashimoto's because Hashimoto's isn't the only cause of hypothyroidism.

Understanding Hashimotou2019s vs Hypothyroidism

But for the vast majority of us with hypothyroidism, around 90%, if not more, have Hashimoto's as a cause. And I'd probably say most people that have Hashimoto's or at least diagnosed with Hashimoto's, they have some degree of like hypothyroidism at some point.

I know it can fluctuate, some sometimes it can reverse. It can yeah, a lot can change. But for a lot of people, by the time they diagnosed with Hashimoto's, it's that it's picked up because those thyroid hormone levels are starting to drop.

And so hypothyroidism or subclinical hypothyroidism is being picked up too. So for me, I was diagnosed with subclinical hypothyroidism, a TSH of nine.

So not that second ago, but oh. Goodness. Yeah, yeah. And then, as I started to understand that more, I then asked if I could have my antibodies checked and about six months later we confirmed I had Hashimoto's.

And it was just off the charts. When you get that measurement of more than 1300 because they don't test any higher. Right. So that that's. Yeah, that's what I have.

So I always say that I have autoimmune hypothyroidism. I just find that's a nice term that just succinctly sums it all

up. Yeah. But yeah, as you said right now and it has been for a few years now, my Hashimoto's has been in remission.

So I don't I don't I don't consider myself like cured. I know, like it's still there because it can obviously come out of remission. But it is in remission. It's well managed.

And in the last five years or so maybe. Yeah, that's five years. So, my health has been in the best place it has ever been. And that's because the Hashimoto's is in remission.

Because the hypothyroidism and how well that is controlled kind of handles Hashimoto's. Right. And so I want to, you know, a lot of people listening might not know that you can reverse Hashimoto's, that you can reduce your antibodies, that you can actually achieve remission of this autoimmune disease.

And we're going to dig into some of that today, which I feel like is so exciting. I, too, have been in remission for over a decade, and in just a completely different health space, just like you, it's I'm just so grateful, you know, to be here.

But having achieving remission when your antibodies were over the detectable level, the over the threshold of a lab, being able to even tell us what it is is pretty remarkable.

How can you tell us, like some ways that you got there? Because I want to clarify. It's not with medication. We don't treat Hashimoto's with medication.

We treat hypothyroid with medication, which is amazing. And helps symptoms so much, but is different than trying to reverse your autoimmune thyroid condition.

Yeah. So like you say, the thyroid hormone replacement like levothyroxine myeloma, thyroid, all of those, they treat the low thyroid hormone levels. They don't necessarily treat the thyroid antibody side of things.

There are some I guess like more anecdotal theories, the being on the right kind of thyroid hormone medication, treating the hypothyroidism sort of thing might generally calm down, like the inflammation and the general stuff going on in your body, but it's just quite angry that it might then help reduce that antibodies.

But the main things that helped me, and I know a lot of people don't want to hear it, but going gluten free refutes it. I know it's a huge stat, and I avoided it for such a long time.

I did not want to face it. The idea of changing the way you eat can be so, so daunting. But, going gluten free made a big difference for me. And not just in my thought antibody levels, but to reduce or eliminated so many of the symptoms like acid reflux, heart palpitations, acne.

I used to have terrible, painful cystic acne that covered most of my face. And that hugely resolves 99 to 5% of that cleared up through that alone. The rest was through sort of learning about skincare and how to properly take care of my skin.

But again, so much of so much of the external symptoms we have, they often have like an internal cause and trigger and way to sort of treat them as well. And I think that's really important.

But yeah, going gluten free, I had low iron. I was anemic at the time diagnosis low B12 and low vitamin D and correcting one of those obviously supplementing and burning levels not just within range, but really optimizing those helped a lot.

How Rachel Reached Hashimotou2019s Remission

And obviously we know that supplementing with vitamin D and selenium as well, have been those two supplements in particular have been shown to help produce side antibodies.

So again, I think there's like a bit of a cycle there. That I was able to just kind of break can get back on top of, and another big piece that I think thankfully we're talking about more and more now, is gut health.

And yeah, I didn't realize just how bad my gut health was until I sorta started working with a functional medicine practitioner, and we broke down exactly what was going on.

So again, the acne was tied into that, just a simple things. Like, again, a lot of people don't want to talk about it, but pay attention to your poo, understand what healthy what healthy bowel habits look like and what a lot of people think.

Oh, I go once a week and that's just normal for me. Actually, for most people that shouldn't be normal. We should be aiming to optimize our digestive health and I did that through, going through a Candida diet for a few months.

And functional medicine practitioner really helped me understand a certain way of eating to get on top of that, to kind of calm down all of the the information and the the bad bacteria overgrowth to person that was going on in my gut and then, you know, it's it's restrictive for a little while.

But when your health starts, you find the vast majority of people can start to add things back in, as well as bone broths, digestive enzymes and probiotics and various things obviously need to be tailored on a patient by patient, basis.

There's no one size fits all. Totally. Just as to say there's no one size fits all five medication. It's the same with all of these interventions as well.

Everybody's kind of did that. Amen. Yeah. All of those things, really helped really helped for me. And to be honest, I think like a lot of those patients, I was trying to figure out all of this on my own for such a long time, for quite a few years.

And I got so far in my health, and then a huge, huge help for me was being able to just kind of hand that over to someone else and just kind of go do this assessment of my health and my lifestyle, tell me what to do, tell me, you know, do that researching for me, do those considerations for me.

And that helped help me to get on. On top of this other jigsaw puzzle piece is adrenal health right? I was I've always been someone who's been a bit more prone to anxiety and stress, but then feeling like I was so alone in trying to figure out my health at the same time just compounded that, and a big relief and a big piece of resolving my adrenal issues was being able to sort of hand my my health over to someone else and let them do like the figuring out the puzzle pieces for me when I got to a certain point.

And all of this just forms. Yeah. I talk about like a big thyroid jigsaw puzzle, and I feel like all of these just want to. Big puzzle. Yeah, it's so true.

And I mean, it's it's so interesting because by the time people arrive to us, to our practice, that modern therapy clinic, they are so used to managing all of this and stressing and being up late, scouring the internet.

And for me to say to them, listen like you can give this to me, let me hold this for you. I can help you, and you just focus on the parts of this process that you need to focus on.

It's so relief thing. And one thing I did want to add to that I share with my patients, and I'm sure you know, you have had a similar journey. Is all of these lifestyle changes sound impossible when you can't get out of bed?

Right. And so a lot of my recommendation, really, when people come to see us is, listen, let me fix your thyroid, let us handle your thyroid function so that you feel better so that you have the energy and the capacity and the motivation to change your diet, to change your lifestyle, to work on all these other pieces of the jigsaw puzzle.

And so I know it feels so overwhelming, but if you can get in the hands of the right clinician and they can really

optimize your hormones, it changes the whole landscape of your ability to pour.

You use that energy to pour back into your health. So even if it sounds overwhelming, it's doable if you do it in the right order, in sequence, right?

Yeah, exactly. And I think as well, it can't be it can't be overestimated enough to just take baby steps. One thing titles you've got this picture of things you think I might need to change.

My diet, my exercise, my my sleep is terrible. You've got these things that you know you probably need to work on. Just one thing at a time. Focus on small, incremental changes, and then you start to get a bit less brain fog, a bit less fatigue.

And then before you know it, there's this snowball effect. And I think that that's really important as well. Yeah. And start with the things that are the least amount of work that create some impact. Right.

Like the small things improve your sleep. That doesn't take a lot of energy. Right. And that can improve your energy and that improved energy you can pour back into doing something else.

Adrenals is something we focus a lot on too, because you can get them. You can just get people feeling so much better so quickly if you do it well, and then that creates more energy and more capacity.

So thanks for sharing that. And how long have you been in remission? So I was first I was initially in remission in February 2018. So that is six and a half years ago ish.

But after I went through my first pregnancy, I came out of remission briefly for a few months after giving birth. And then I've been back in remission through that.

So through that, through my second pregnancy and afterwards, I've stayed in remission this time around. So that's been, oh, four years, something like that.

So yeah. So we might talk about later. I had two very different pregnancy experiences as well. Yeah. And I love like I do want to weave your fertility journey into this conversation because that's something I hear about from social media followers and people that come see us at Morton Thyroid Clinic every day.

These women want answers to their fertility and their doctor's like, well, it's not your thyroid. And they're three, you know? And it's like, well, you know, maybe we could do a little better to just set you up for success.

And can you tell me kind of some things, some steps that you took when you were trying to optimize your fertility and your health journey and pregnancy and balancing all of that while you had a thyroid problem.

Yeah. So I initially I went into wanting to start a family, somewhat naive. So my thyroid antibodies were in remission. By this point. My thyroid levels had been stable for quite a while.

I had been gluten free. My health was good, but I would still have thyroid flare days. You know, those days where you've overexerting yourself, the symptoms really rage you.

You can do nothing but rest. I would still have a handful of those a month. So my health was good, but it wasn't the best. And I went into that thinking that that would that would be enough.

I just really wanted to be a parent. I fell pregnant immediately and, lost the pregnancy a couple weeks later and it was such a heartbreaking experience that I, I knew I wanted to, I guess I could do better next time I delve more into what I could do to optimize my fertility more.

So I knew that obviously, we don't always know the cause behind a miscarriage. We can do certain things to reduce the chances of one to look after ourselves.

We don't always know the cause, but I knew that I wanted to do what was within my control. And from that miscarriage, I spent about 14 months. Then optimizing my health before I fell pregnant again.

And with that one, I went on to have my son, there was an 18 month gap, and then I fell pregnant again, and I went on to have my second son. And so I credit a lot of the things that I did with me falling pregnant easily the second and third time and having good pregnancies and healthy children by the end of that.

And the things I did during those 14 months also included optimizing my sorry medication so that I wasn't just within range so that my free T3 was sort of like in the top third, top quarter.

We generally sort of see people recommend those. Obviously people can have slightly different places that they might be optimized, but that's where my free T3 was, my free T4 around the middle of the range.

And generally because I'm on and medication, I'm on on the thyroid, my TSH is pretty much always suppressed. Any time that we lower my medication to bring my TSH up, my free T3 and three T4 drop away below even the bottom of the range, it's not.

It's I know it's controversial. It's just not something that we could achieve for me. So that's generally where my thought I was where with optimizing those, I again worked on my gut health.

I went back to basics with my functional medicine practitioner and did what we could to get my gut health to a really strong place. She worked also with me on, my sex hormones.

Fertility, Pregnancy, and Postpartum Thyroid Changes

Showed that my ratio of eastern to progesterone was off, that it was contributing to certain, like, fertility struggles, acne, PMS, very happy periods, migraines, all of those symptoms we worked on that, went back through vitamin levels.

My iron and vitamin D had since dropped after I optimized them years before. We had some work to do there. And I think a a big part of it for me in terms of my facility journey was adrenal stress as well.

And there's so much that we can say on that, and it's when you have adrenal dysfunction. So we're not necessarily talking about the extremes of Cushing's or Addison Addison's disease.

But I had chronically high cortisol all day long. Yeah. All four points tested throughout the day. And that was having this knock on effect that I was obviously stressed and anxious.

And I would cycle through anxiety and depression. I couldn't sleep. When I finally fell asleep, I didn't stay asleep. It was I was honestly living in this fight or flight mode all the time.

And in order to tackle that, looking at things like, my gut health and my diet was really important, but also the exercise that I was doing at the time, which was really just too much for my body.

I was doing a lot of cardio, a lot of forcing things that didn't feel good, but I thought it was the right thing to do, right? Actually, what we had to do for for a while, for a good maybe six, eight months was pull back.

And I did walking some gentle swimming, not like competitive swimming and a lot of yoga. And once my health was starting to re stabilize and build again, that I could then start to add back in, like I just, I loved going to like cardio dance classes and I so do them now it's it's my favorite form of that type of exercise.

And I could start to add those back in again, but that was a point in my health where doing any more than sort of more restorative and gentle exercise was just entering me into this cycle.

That just meant I could not get better. And I think a lot of people feel that way. They think they're doing the right

things. Often we need to pull back, stop, start afresh and reassess and keep reassessing as we go along and like tune in to our bodies.

And yeah, that was that was a really big thing as well as, as well as the the type of exercise I was doing, I was over exercising as well, which I think a lot of people don't realize they're doing.

And I was like, just keep. Pushing, thinking they'll get stronger. And they're making themselves weaker. Exactly. And then adding into that cycle, I at the time, also had really unhealthy disordered eating behaviors and patterns and, I was a chronic diet and I was constantly, you know, yo yo dieting on a really restrictive diet for a while, being off there.

And my body just did not know what it felt like to not be stressed, essentially. And every, every form of the word. So, yeah, doing everything to tackle all those different parts, to promote better adrenal health was, was really, really important.

And a lot of the other things that we talk about tackle that inadvertently that everything is so interlinked. Right? It's not that we just do one thing and another thing.

They all feed into each other. And I think that's what a lot of people don't. But they're not quite aware of. We don't hear that. Yeah I agree. And you know, it's it's so interesting that our journeys as women and men too.

But I always say women with hypothyroidism is so it's we feel so alone. But they we mirror each other so much, you know, like I want to put a pin in two little things that you said.

One is listen to your body, especially when it comes to exercise. My role with exercise with my patients is if you are more tired later that day, or you feel sick or you need a nap, you're overdoing it and pull back.

The walking yoga, very slow weight training where you let your heart rate completely come down between sets. Those are my preferred forms too, especially for people in the in the adrenal crisis.

And then the other thing I wanted to put a pin in. Well, two more things. One is you can take someone's thyroid if you don't fix their adrenals, they don't get better.

You can fix someone's adrenals. If you don't fix their thyroid, they don't get better. Like just like you said, they're so intertwined. And then the last thing is, and this is mainly so women don't feel alone.

Disordered eating with thyroid issues is a pervasive problem because essentially what happens is women lose control of the outcome. They can restrict, they can diet, they can exercise, but they can't appropriately lose weight.

Right. And so they restrict more and more and they just take away more and more things. And that's a core metabolic issue that has to be addressed in in a multitude of facets.

But you're not alone. But also the answer doesn't lie in further and further and further restriction. So you guys need to reach out to someone, a clinician who can help you navigate the complexities of that, because it can be a little bit of a slippery slope and really discouraging as years and years go on.

Right. Tell me you touched on this a little bit earlier, but, you know, postpartum is the most common time where at risk as women for autoimmune thyroiditis like Graves or Hashimoto's.

Tell me a little bit and I know you have two kiddos. Tell me a little bit about one versus the other, and maybe what you thought was so different between the two.

So my first pregnancy, was pretty textbook. It was easy. I was because here on the NHS, they don't they don't regularly prescribe anything other than leave my thoughts.

And I was automatically referred to be, specialist managed for being on amici. Right. But generally I would see my specialists. I was discharged immediately.

They were happy for my private doctor who was the third specialist to manage that for me. And apart from that, it was textbook. No major issues. Happy, healthy pregnancy.

The birth that I wanted to have. Immediately postpartum, I felt absolutely fine. I was doing fine. I hit six months postpartum, and suddenly my health just, like, went down the drain.

Acne started coming out again. Obviously you lose hair when you're postpartum anyway, but I was losing a lot more than I expected. I was fatigued even though I was so lucky to have a baby who was already sleeping 12 hours through the night, I was still completely shattered.

And I went back to my functional medicine practitioner and my Hashimoto's had come out of remission. My, hormone levels had changed again. Essentially, the on side was so optimizing my free T3, but my free T4 had dropped below range.

There was a lot going on that was adrenal stress. This was all happening in 2020 with the global pandemic as well. We had just a lot going on. Gemini.

And yeah, I went back to basics again. We started working on my gut health, my adrenals. I, I think, as part of the lifestyle side of living in star condition and being a parent as well, it's something we don't care about enough.

It's trying to navigate those two things. So I saw it, and I found myself comparing what I was doing with my baby along to friends and other women in my social circles who had a baby born at the same time in the pandemic, but did not have health conditions that had maybe come out of remission and the rest of it.

And so I had to really draw back and reassess. This is where I am. This is what I'm dealing with. This is what I'm going to focus on. I'm not going to be out all day going here, there and everywhere with my baby.

Like like my friends. This is what I need to do. I need to set firm boundaries. I'm going to say yes to these things. No to these things. And, yeah, I guess doing all of that really supported, my adrenal health as well as everything else.

I worked on improving my sleep and all the various ways that we talked about earlier. And within 2 or 3 months, the Hashimoto's was back in remission.

My private doctor at that point decided that the best course of action in terms of my thyroid hormone levels was probably to add in a small amount of Lygo Fox and alongside the homicide, I was apprehensive, decided to go with it, and it was honestly the best decision for me.

And again, it's a controversial point of view, right? We don't often see these medications going together, but as we said, there is no one size fits all.

And in the last five years, it's becoming apparent I've had to learn to become so much more open minded about just following what my body is telling me that needs, But yeah, that's how we tackled that.

And again, by the time my baby was one year, one year old, I was back to feeling really good. Really good health. By the time I was 18 months old, we decided to try to expand our family.

I was already putting in place everything that I had done to make the conceive the first time around. So I fell pregnant quickly. Again, this pregnancy stuck.

But the major difference with this pregnancy was that I was on Omastar. I didn't leave I foxy all the way through, and I genuinely feel like that is probably why this pregnancy was slightly harder.

So whereas in my first, my thyroid level stayed very consistent, they were optimal until my third trimester. I didn't actually need an increase in almost until towards the end of that pregnancy.

My levels were very consistent with the second pregnancy. My levels were dropping every few weeks and it meant that I was more high risk because obviously that woman was dropping.

It means your pregnancy can be more risk. So I was monitoring a lot more closely. The levothyroxine was, it was increased about four times by the time I was six months pregnant.

The almost married had stayed the same because again, what that was doing to my thyroid hormone levels was very predictable. By the time I got to five, six months pregnant, it was then a bit of an easier pregnancy.

But those the first and second trimester was very rough. And I had, I can't remember the full name, but it's something I say since I had, liver, abnormal liver results of my second pregnancy.

So I was high risk for that. My placenta also hadn't formed properly during that pregnancy. So along with that, on my thyroid hormone levels, just jumping around like crazy.

Yeah, it was a lot more high risk. Luckily, myself, my baby was fine. He was a very healthy birth weight. And again, I got a very straightforward birth pool.

Just guessing at birth, which is what I wanted. Again, the second time around. And we will ultimately find that the interesting thing with that postpartum is that my Hashimoto's never came out of remission, and I just felt good.

Okay, I love it. A little bit of like relief towards the right. Exactly. I was like this, I feel like I've earned this after such a stressful pregnancy.

But yeah, first pregnancy, very easy postpartum, not so much. And then the complete reverse the second time around. But it just goes to show, I say, you know, we're all so different.

Our pregnancy journeys are different. And actually each of our pregnancy journeys varies as a person can also be different. But yeah, I felt like it was the the change in time medication that probably made things slightly different for me and I for women on leave.

I thought only they do need those, those sort of sudden immediate medication dosage increases, usually as soon as they're pregnant. And then it happens quite incrementally.

So that's, that's that's kind of what I theorize. But yeah, very, very different. Yeah. You know, one, I'm so thankful that my thyroid crisis wasn't when I was a mom.

I don't know how moms do it. Like, I really don't I can't I think back and I barely survived.

Daily Habits, Sleep, and Blood Sugar Support

Just like taking care of myself. I can't imagine caring for one or more other children, but one kind of thing. I want to point out from your journey that you kept kind of highlighting is I went back to the basics.

I went back to my tools, you know, and I think what can happen with women on this journey is they get well and then they have like they take a step back and they're like, oh my gosh, I'm going back to where I was like, it's all over, you know?

And the reality is if if you have your toolkit and you have your team, you'll never go back to where you were. Like, you'll always intervene early in the process.

And just because you take a back step doesn't mean you have to completely revert to the person you were in the

middle of your crisis. You just have to go back to your tools and and use them.

And you know, in your way out of it. And it's usually a heck of a lot faster than it is the first round, for sure. Yeah, I think I was I was one of those patients that thought it was like a checklist.

You check off these things and then you're good. You never have to think about it ever again. And it's not. It's again, it's not something everyone wants to hear, but it's an ongoing practice.

It's the things you do every single day. It's the things you are consistent with. That's why you see. That's why you see the change and that's why you maintain the change.

And what are your tools that you still kind of use, even if it's like some of the time, right. It doesn't always have to be rigid and super dogmatic in black and white, but whatever.

Or like I could rephrase the question is, what are some tips that maybe you would share? Obviously we're all unique and we don't have there's no one size fits, all right?

We've totally we've honed in on that today. But what are some things that other people could do that are easy, that might allow them to make an impact in how their day to day life is going?

Right now, as a mom or just as a human struggling with us. I think we touched on this earlier, but I, I feel like we don't talk enough about optimizing or sleep and or sleep hygiene understanding, understanding that not just children need a bedtime routine.

We need down downtime in the evenings. We need we need a routine that our bodies follow and and they go, oh, okay, it's time to sleep now. It's time to wind up, put things.

We can pack things away for tomorrow. We need that as well. We can't expect to be working and answering emails any time of day, and then lay down to lay down in bed and go to sleep.

That's it's just not going to work that way. So optimizing what our evenings look like and putting electronics away at least a couple hours before bed, low lighting if it's a shower or a bath with Epsom salts, that helps to wean you down.

If it's journaling, journaling is great. Getting anything that's going around your head out on paper. One side, I'll deal with that in the morning. It's a brilliant and very easy and it's a great tool.

It's the cost. Anything. A lot of these things are really simple. Yeah. Anything like that, those small changes that you can make. You know, I used to be someone who would struggle to fall asleep before 2 a.m.

because I had that typical tired but wired. I was tired that I couldn't switch my brain off. I'd fall asleep at two, I wake up at 4:00, and then I'd be awake till maybe seven.

I get an hour, and then right now I've really got to get on with work, and that just exacerbates. Then there's high cortisol, and then before you know it, that's stopping you from getting to sleep.

So these small changes that we can make to let our bodies know it is time to rest and that we can rest and if you have ongoing things that are playing on your mind, anxiety, worries, seek out mental health support.

Find ways to to just let go and process all of those things going on inside of you. I think people with our conditions so commonly have gone through a childhood trauma or major life events, which have often played a part in triggering those horrid condition.

And again, it's it's part of that puzzle that so many of us need to deal with so that we can we can slot those other puzzle pieces into place. So, yeah, sleep, rest, recuperation.

I think that is really important. And like we said, doesn't cost anything. Small steps make a big difference. And in terms of diet, I find that what I eat, what I drink plays a huge part in how I feel day to day.

I personally, I know it's not the same for who. As with everything, but I personally do not consume alcohol. I haven't for about 5 or 6 years. I think that was another big factor in the Hashimoto's side of things, because that improved my gut health so much by giving it back home.

I'm also caffeine free for the most part. And, yeah. And, I the other thing I was going to say is I generally eat in a way that I'm focusing on balancing my blood sugar. So, eating with a focus of at least a third protein, healthy fats on the plate and the rest being some carbs and lots of veggies and things like that.

It's. I try and get into the habit of whatever I'm eating, snack or meal. Where am I seeing that color? Where's my where am I, where my protein talks coming from and eating that way?

It just even if it does nothing else, nothing else, it just gives you that more sustainable energy and that clearer mind. It can really help with fatigue and brain fog.

If you're consuming sugar, a lot of sugar and carbs, but sugar is just going crazy up and down. You know, people wonder why they have things like heart palpitations that can be a driver for things like that.

We have a lot of thyroid symptoms that, yes, can be from Hashimoto's or hypothyroidism alone, but a lot of the time there are these other habits that we're doing that we don't realize that are also feeding into and contributing to some of these symptoms, too.

So, yeah, for me, those sort of simple areas of diet, not everyone needs to give up alcohol and caffeine, but if you can eat in a way that is going to balance your blood sugar and promote better energy and brain function throughout the day, like you said earlier, you unlock more ability to then take on next steps.

So I think those are both both fairly simple places to start. And I think by doing those things alone, you just get the snowball rolling totally. I put on a CGM a few years ago, and I was shocked how fluctuations of my blood sugar within what would be considered so normal made me tired.

I was like, wow, I underestimated the impact of this. I was guilty of that myself. And so I'm a firm believer. Before I, I thank you so much for this conversation.

Before I let you go, I see at least one, I think two or more of your books in the background. I you have such an inspiring story of like, pain to purpose.

I've read your children's book to my daughters, and I would love for you to share a little bit about your work and how you advocate for all of us with thyroid conditions, and share with us your books.

Yeah, so I've written so far three books currently working on my fourth book, circle. Bear Inside Advocate. That is essentially my journey of being in that terrible place, getting my health back.

Books, Patient Advocacy, and Closing Thoughts

And, I guess the it's all the stuff I wanted to know and wish I had when I was diagnosed. So, like the basics around what, what should be tested for your thyroid, what your results should look like.

And the other, like we touched on today, the other key areas to explore. And then you, me and hypothyroidism actually co-wrote this with my husband. So this talks about, the impacts to our relationships and how we can navigate that.

Whether it's with your spouse or a sibling or work colleague, a parent child, even, how we can navigate that through our relationships and try and find a place of mutual understanding for each other and then, sorry,

superhero, like you said, is a children's book.

So that was borne out of, my now almost five year old asking me many questions about my work and about my thyroid condition. And I just figured he can't be the only child who wants to know.

Why is mommy more tired some days? Or what does daddy mean when he says that mommy is having a Saturday? Or, you know, why doesn't we take a pill every day?

Very simple questions I wanted to answer in a non overwhelming way. And I think because what is it answering their questions, it just feeds into my wider story, wanting to raise awareness of their conditions of symptoms.

They often they are often hereditary. I want my children to be able to spot the signs and symptoms, not only in themselves, but in people around them.

They might be with their loved one in the future. They might have friends who develop symptoms. So again, it all just feeds into this wider purpose of the invisible hypothyroidism.

I'm very active across podcasts, social media. I've got my email newsletters and my website, the Invisible Hypothyroidism. And, yeah. Well, so I'm not a medical professional.

I do speak a lot from the patient experience. What I learn from medical professionals, I'm really just just the complete three, three, six days of our life that it touches.

We don't often hear about the effects to fertility, relationships, work life, the lifestyle impacts. So, those are the areas that I often focus on, sort of drawing from my personal experiences, whilst also always wanting to hear and learn from the wider community because, yeah, I think there are a lot of, a lot of the same feelings, experiences and emotions through what we experience.

We all come from different walks of life, but ultimately we all face a lot of the same frustrations to start patients. And I think there's just so much to learn from each other.

I couldn't agree more. And thank you for your education, for your advocacy. We need that, right? Like we are not in a place yet where we can simply go to our doctor and expect to be treated and diagnosed appropriately in the first round.

And I think thyroid, knowledge and empowerment is shifting because of people like you. So thank you for your work. Thank you so much for taking the time at night to have this conversation with me to share with everyone.

Please, please, please follow Rachael. Look up Invisible Hypothyroidism and thank you again.