Uncover The Link Between Thyroid, Testosterone, And Heart Health Transcript

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Introduction to Dr. Amy Horniman

All right. Welcome back to the Heart Attack and Stroke Recovery and Prevention Summit. I am your co-host, doctor Jack Wolfson. And I've got the pleasure today to bring on Doctor Amy Horniman.

And if you don't know, Doctor Amy, you're going to love what she has to say. She is known as the thyroid fixer, and she is the author of that book. International speaker and host of the top rated podcast in medicine and alternative health, the Thyroid Fixer.

Doctor Amy founded the Better Thyroid Hormone Institute, offering personalized care for thyroid in hormone health across the United States and Canada.

Doctor Amy is also the founder of the Fix or supplement line, targeting weight loss, fatigue, low libido and hormone imbalances. And she is just a hormone expert.

In addition to so many other things that she is just brilliant in. So. So I'm very excited to have her on. And really, she went on this journey because she has her own thyroid and hormone struggles.

And conventional medicine was not any help to her. So, doctor Amy's mission is to optimize your health and restore your life. So welcome, Doctor Amy, to the summit.

Doctor Jack, thank you so much. I love being here with you. Let's do this. Awesome. Thank you. So, you know, we, we see things alike in so many different ways.

So that's what's what's great here. But I think, you know, as I look to thyroid and so many people who struggle with thyroid issues, they're on thyroid, pharmaceuticals, they're not getting the benefits that they thought that they were going to get.

They're seeing conventional doctors. So let's kind of break it down about how important the thyroid is as it relates to the topic, which is heart attack prevention.

And if you had a heart attack or a stroke, you know, that's why people are here. So let's talk about that right in the heart. Absolutely. So we had to start off with the thyroid being the master gland.

And it really does have an impact on all systems of the body. We know that every single cell in our body has a receptor site on it for thyroid hormones, specifically T3 thyroid hormone.

Because T4 is inactive, T3 is active. So T3 finds that little receptor site on the on the cell and attaches to it to do its job.

Thyroid Health and Heart Risk

So whether that's giving you a metabolism, lighting up your brain, controlling your heart rhythm, altering your blood pressure, controlling your lipids, controlling your insulin secretion and your blood glucose regulation, it really does come back to, I mean, in addition to lifestyle factors, you have to look at thyroid function because many times will have and I know you see this as well.

You'll have someone who is doing all the things they're eating a paleo style diet. They're living that ancestral lifestyle. They are really honed in on their body, doing the biohacking, taking the supplements and they still have these crazy heart symptoms or wacky numbers.

Their blood pressure is low. There's blood pressure is high. Their insulin is off the chart. They're insulin resistant. They're borderline diabetic. And we go back to the thyroid and go, well, you're in this deep hypothyroid state.

Everything is low and slow. And that's basically sending signals to the rest of your body to not work properly. So that's why I always like to start with the thyroid when it comes to even something like heart health, we'll have it.

We've talked about this a boatload that we'll have patients that have heart palpitations. They'll have a low resting heart rate. They'll have a rapid heart rate, they'll have AFib, they'll have tachycardia.

And and they think it's weak. And maybe it is just heart related. But they think it's something else. They think they need the pharmacy article. And they don't go deep enough to look at that master gland and start there to rule that out or address it before they go on to doing other things for their heart health, like the pharmaceuticals.

So, you know, again, I totally agree that root cause approach is so, so important. And, you know, when we talk about, you know, women and having heart attacks and certainly men having heart attacks, maybe, you know, delve into what you think are some of the main reasons why people are having these, events.

Yeah. So I think it does come down to lifestyle. And I know you and I are very big, strong believers in having that base foundation for a person's nutrition, their lifestyle, their their stress management.

Are they eating well? Are they living well? Are they emotionally in a good place? Because all of that matters. So as much as the thyroid is the master gland, and I love to look at it, obviously, and optimize it, we can't blame everything on the thyroid.

So if someone does have a cardiac event, that is, that's one thing to look at 100%. That's one thing to look at. One of my best employees, she she was a patient before she became an employee.

She actually before she was a patient, she was on Metropole. She had AFib. She had a full ablation of the heart. And she goes, you know, I'm so angry because I know it was my thyroid.

So for her, it did come back to the thyroid, but for, you know, everyone else. Yeah. Let's look at the thyroid. But let's look at your lifestyle. Let's look at that, that base layer of what you're eating and how you're living and are you moving and where's your stress level.

Because that directly impacts not just thyroid function. It does I mean, if you're you're living a crappy lifestyle, it's going to come back and kick your thyroid.

But but it's also going to affect your heart and set you up for an increased risk of heart disease or cardiac events. So the people who, you know, listening and maybe they've been told they've got hypothyroidism, they're on pharmaceuticals.

And now we go back to like, root cause, first of all, let me say, is there an opportunity to get people off of thyroid, medication? Sometimes there is.

So I get this question a lot, and it really depends on the individual and how far down that destructive pathway they are and what I mean by that is 95% of all hypothyroidism is Hashimoto's.

So this is the autoimmune form of hypothyroidism where your body thinks your thyroid is a bad guy and it goes out and attacks it. So just if you want to think of rheumatoid arthritis, your body is attacking your joints.

Same thing Hashimoto's. Your body is attacking your thyroid. So after years and years of being in this war, your thyroid gland gets really beat up and jagged and small.

And when it's all messed up and beat up and jagged, it's just not producing the T4 and T3 that it once did when it was plump and healthy and not under attack.

So it really depends on how far down that pathway someone is. And we can look at an ultrasound, we can look at their numbers, of course, but if we're catching it in the beginning and this is really the message to everyone to get that full thyroid panel, you know, we don't do not rely on conventional medicines testing of your thyroid because it's just going to be TSH.

And maybe T4 people have to be working with someone like yourself to get that full panel, because you know what to test. You know what to look at when you're looking at that full panel and you're catching things early enough, then yes, we have that opportunity to get someone off of the pharmaceuticals.

Now, the flip side of that is, at the same time, if we're using that bioidentical hormone replacement, i.e. thyroid medication, to replace hormones that are just no longer being properly made by your body, your thyroid has been under attack for years.

It's teeny tiny. It's not doing its job. It's not producing T4 23. It's struggling with converting T4 over to T3. Then those bioidentical hormones have a place because they're literally going to give you your life back.

Hashimoto's, Antibodies, and Autoimmunity

So in that scenario, I would say, okay, in lieu of you gaining another 50 pounds as we try to get you off of the medication, let's just optimize that medication.

Let's optimize the hormones that we're giving you to be in that right combination that's right for you, where puts you in that perfect balance. Eliminate your symptoms so you can live the best life ever.

Really depends on the person. Now, the advanced thyroid testing that you talk about, we're talking about, you know, TSH and free T3 and free T4 and reverse T3.

But then we check those thyroid antibodies. So let's say someone is on thyroid hormone numbers look good, but they still have a lot of antibodies that are there.

What problems does that pose. And then how can we reduce the number of thyroid, antibodies that are there. Then unpack that that thyroid antibody story.

Yeah. Yeah I love it. So those antibodies I love using analogy so people can get at think of those antibodies as soldiers. So whenever you look at your TPO, thyroid peroxidase or TGA, if I were globulin you're going to have a number next to it.

Some people have it in the thousands, some people have a couple hundred. But those are the amount of soldiers that you have that are literally going out and attacking your thyroid.

Now, what we know about autoimmune is autoimmune begets autoimmune where we see one, we see more than one. So when those soldiers go out and they attack your thyroid, you know, for lack of a better, there's not a deep medical science based analogy, but, you know, they look over and they go, you know, there's some joints over there.

Let's go over and attack. And now this person has rheumatoid arthritis. They attack your skin, you have psoriasis, they start attacking your small intestine.

Oh look, here's celiac, which that is very, very common with Hashimoto's to see multiple autoimmune conditions together. So the goal in reducing those antibodies or literally putting Hashimoto's into remission, the goal there is not just to protect your thyroid.

I mean, yeah, that's a huge bonus, but it's to protect the rest of your body from future attacks and turning into other autoimmune conditions. Now, there are some really simple things that we can do.

Number one, gluten free. It is not a fad. I talk about this all the time based in science. We know that the protein molecule called gliadin, that is, that makes up gluten.

You know, we always use the term gluten gluten free products, all of this. But it's it's really that protein molecule gliadin that looks exactly like the thyroid gland and chemical structure.

We call it molecular mimicry. So what happens going back to the analogy of soldiers. Those soldiers you eat gluten. Those soldiers say, you know what, there's something coming in the system here that looks like the thyroid gland.

We know the thyroid gland is a bad guy. We know we wage war on the thyroid gland. Now we have another invader coming in. It's time for war. So those soldiers go out and they literally launch an attack in your body.

This is where what we call an autoimmune flare, they launch this attack to where? Yes, they're attacking your thyroid. They're trying to get rid of the gluten that you've just consumed or that you're consuming on a daily basis.

And with that, they're going to build their army. They're going to find other places to attack, hands down. So just by eliminating gluten, we can see a massive reduction in thyroid antibodies in that autoimmune flare.

Other natural things like black cumin seed oil. Oh my goodness. The studies on black human is amazing, especially as it relates to Hashimoto's, but specifically all autoimmune conditions.

It lowers inflammation. I have seen a 200 300 point drop in antibody numbers just from using black human seed oil, paired up with going gluten free, controlling our stress, supporting our immune system.

All of those things are vital if we're really looking at knocking down that autoimmunity and putting your autoimmunity into remission. But I thought all seed oils were bad.

You just said that black human seed oil is good, which and I say that right tongue in cheek because I'm not I'm not one of these people who is on the seed oil bandwagon like you.

And I don't eat a lot of and consume a lot of seed oil anyways. But it's interesting that there are like hundreds of studies on Nigella sativa, which is black human seed oil.

And it's and it's, you know, benefits, there as it relates to these antibodies. Talk me through, leaky gut and essentially, let's say leaky gut, leaky thyroid writes words just like this gland is just messed up.

So and you talk about all those different antibodies that are there and like that leaky gut panel. So let me go even further back on that. Talk to me about, gut microbiome, leaky gut and thyroid.

Okay. Let's put this together. Okay. The gut. I mean, if you're listening to this, you've definitely heard at some point of time that immunity starts in the gut.

And beyond that, with the thyroid, the gut is actually one of the places where conversion happens. So what I mean by that is that T4 inactive thyroid hormone has to be converted to T3.

Going back to what we said in the beginning, your cells have a receptor site on it for T3. So that conversion has to happen. T4 you can take all the T4 you want.

Your thyroid can produce all the T4 it wants. If it does not get converted into T3, it literally does nothing in your body. It's inactive. So a lot of that conversion actually happens in the gut.

So we take someone with leaky gut, which is a really general term. But if you think of any kind of gut issues from H. Pylori, dysbiosis, diverticulitis, diverticulosis and really just if you think about the bombardment on our gut from the garbage that we eat, and then even beyond that, things that we can't even control, like our environment, the air that

we breathe as much as possible, right.

Our gut takes a beating. It takes a beating. Let's add on top of that, eating gluten. That's a huge leaky gut contributor. Literally tearing down the walls of the gut.

So things like lipopolysaccharide are in a nutshell, toxins can actually permeate the gut lining and get into the system. There's so much here to unpack.

Number one, if you have this, if you have a leaky gut, your T4, T3 conversion is going to go down. Your reverse T3 is going to go up. And what that does is it puts your body in survival mode.

We don't want you to have elevated reverse T3. Number two, you have leaky gut toxins are going into your bloodstream directly affecting thyroid function.

So now the poor thyroid gland is getting beaten up by these toxins. It can't work properly whatsoever. Those toxins stimulate the immune system to launch stimulate your your soldiers to launch another attack.

So now we have another autoimmune flare. And really I mean we'll hear from people that like let's take gluten again for an example.

Gut Health, Leaky Gut, and Thyroid Conversion

You know, when we clean up somebody and we get them to eliminate gluten and then they go on vacation and then they go, you know, yeah, I went way off my diet.

I absolutely consume bread and pasta and all the gluten containing foods. And wow, I felt inflamed. I go, that's because you were inflamed. Your whole entire body was inflamed and then we'll hear people say, I literally gained 5 pounds. Yes you did.

Yes you did. Because your body is inflamed, you're holding on to water and you shut down your thyroid function. You weren't converting your T4 to T3 anymore.

Your poor thyroid gland is on the struggle bus trying to produce hormones. So yes, absolutely. What you do and what you consume affects your gut, affects leaky gut, and that has widespread consequences throughout our whole body in a variety of different ways.

Yeah. You know, it's and, you know, when you talk about the gut, I think that gut health is so much starts with the gut microbiome and everything, you know, plays with everything.

But, any data you can think of specifically that would relate to something like probiotic supplementation and improvement in thyroid antibodies or thyroid function.

I have not know. You'll have to let me know if you've seen that data. I have not seen a direct correlation with, let's say, different probiotic strains or probiotics in general and their effect on on antibodies.

It's more of that indirect. So when we're looking at the gut I like to use different types of probiotics and different types of strains. I like prebiotics as well.

I like people that take breaks from their probiotics because what drives me crazy are these people that got on the Activia train and they're like, well, I take probiotics every day because I eat Activia yogurt.

It's like, no, no, no, no, you're feeding. I mean, maybe if you're lucky, you're feeding a billion of your gut bacteria, but there are trillions and trillions that are still in there starving for for some support.

So I really like using a more comprehensive approach when it comes to the gut. But I would be interested. Like I

said, if you happen to know if there are certain strains of probiotics that would directly affect autoimmunity, and then specifically the Hashimoto antibodies.

Yeah, it's not it's not that I'm aware of that. I just like to throw random questions out and brilliant people and see what their response is. Not as fun.

Well, now I'm going to look it up. So I have to get back to you on that. Well, I know I think your answer certainly is a good one, obviously. Just and whether or not there is data, we can you and I can both look at it and say, well, of course, if you nourish the gut microbiome and support that gut microbiome, then all the downstream effects, including thyroid health, etc., are going to be are going to be great.

All right. So you know, anyone who's on a thyroid issues, obviously they would be perfect to link up with you. But also one of your areas of expertise is testosterone.

So let's talk about your take on testosterone, not only for men, but for women as it relates to heart attack. You know, and, and stroke prevention, a lot of times, you know, testosterone is given a bad rap.

And candidly, I think what the problem is lies is that if you take a sickly male, for example, who's eating McDonald's cookies and cupcakes, his testosterone is a little bit low.

He's got symptoms of, around low tea, which may or may not be from the tea, but you throw that person on testosterone, and that's the guy who winds up having a myocardial infarction, heart attack or stroke in the next couple of months.

So talk me through testosterone. Why it's important for men and women. And heart attack prevention. Yeah. And, you know, I'll say this first, it's a shame because it's it's those people.

It's those individual cases that then cast the shadow in the conventional medicine world onto these doctors brains, that then all testosterone is bad.

Testosterone will cause a heart attack, myocardial infarction, all of that without really looking at that individual's lifestyle, nutrition, testosterone.

I called the GSD hormone get stuff done hormone. I mean, it does so much. And as it relates to both male and female, it is vital. Now the the wall that ladies kind of run up against is that conventional medicine still puts testosterone into a male category.

It's a male hormone. Well, I mean, yes, men have more of it, but women also have it. And especially in menopause where women are more prone to cardiovascular disease.

Re testosterone is actually the most abundant hormone in a woman in menopause. Now, that doesn't mean that it's surging high or that she's, you know, becoming a bodybuilder in menopause.

It just means that it takes over because estrogen and progesterone drop. So now testosterone become the most abundant. But that doesn't mean that it's optimal.

So we always want to get both sexes into their individual optimal ranges and do it the right way. And to your point, there's so many clinics, hormone clinics popping up on every corner because literally menopause has become the latest buzzword.

I think it's taken over biohacking in our world. And and there are hormone clinics popping up everywhere to where you can go in and get your testosterone.

They can put a pellet in your butt if they want to. They'll give you shots. They'll give you creams, they will send you on your way. They will not retest you.

You and I have both had these patients come to us that are just literally being thrown out the door with, with this hormone, this very beautiful but very potent hormone.

And they're confused how to use it. No one's checking their levels. No one is asking how they're feeling. No one's following up on them. And that is where we see problems occur.

And no one is going deep into their diet and their lifestyle the way that they live. Are they eating, you know, cookies, cakes, donuts and drinking some alcohol on top of it, which is going to set them up for a greater risk of of myocardial infarction or anything a-fib anything that comes from throwing on excessive amounts of testosterone and not looking at the individual.

But when used properly, we know that the data supports a decrease risk in cardiovascular disease.

Testosterone for Heart and Hormone Health

So we can kind of lump that in, you know, all the different heart things that can go on, like doctor Jack knows, all the different heart things can be lumped into a category of we see a reduction in all of this when we properly use testosterone and get someone into that sweet spot.

Optimal range not too high, not crazy like bro gym dude levels. But in that sweet spot range that is protective. And the other thing that testosterone does linking it back to Hashimoto's and antibodies, it lowers antibodies.

It helps reduce inflammation in the body. So when we have a male or a female with Hashimoto's, we normally see low testosterone, especially in men, because men get hit so much less with autoimmune conditions than women do.

Why? Because you guys just in general have more testosterone. Even if your T is low, it's still higher than ours. So you had this beautiful protective layer of testosterone that helps to lower autoimmune antibodies and literally protect the body.

So whenever I have a male patient with Hashimoto's, I go right over to his testosterone level and I go, yep, that's low. And it totally makes sense. There's such a correlation there.

Yes, yes, us men and we get all the advantages. I get it totally. And by the way, Doctor Amy was a former bodybuilder. Just in case you didn't know that.

So, figure figure not not not big, bulky bodybuilder figure. I was. I was just lean and pretty still. Okay. Well, I have been around doctor Amy and I would not want to mess with her by mistakenly making the comment, so I apologize.

That figure. Yes. Yeah. Not not big, bulky, not even close. Right. So what levels are we looking at or we would want to start in men. We're, you know, because the company line I think is men is like 350, you know, is is like that cut off.

I think there's also been some legal ramifications where men were started on testosterone above 350 and the doctors, you know, came under the scrutiny of their medical board.

But tell me about some of those numbers. For men, I'm much more familiar with men as they cut off, women. I think a lot of times very postmenopausal women, their testosterone is undetectable.

And you're saying, like, that's just not going to work. Right? Right. You know, honestly, both sexes really get left behind when it comes to the standard lab value ranges on those labs.

So we'll start with men. So yes, men standard lab value range on your blood. Where for total testosterone we'll normally start at like a 250 to 85. And then more recently when I actually look at the cutoff I normally don't I'm just looking at the, the number, the value that that person has.

But when I happen to glance over at that lab value range, what I'm seeing, even with lab corners, they brought that down to 900. So a man is actually getting flagged high if he's 1000 or 1100 with his testosterone.

Where I really now this is definitely age dependent and unique to each individual. But in general, a man is not going to feel his best if he's under 500, 600 for his testosterone.

I mean, he's just not. And and then we will see, in addition to him being more depressed, possibly having sexual dysfunction increase adipose tissue, growing man boobs, all the things.

We'll also see an increased risk of cardiac disease and stroke. We'll see abnormal lipid panels. We'll see high blood pressure where he's being thrown on a on a BP med thrown on a stat and then for his lipid panel.

And it really comes back to hey, what if we just use testosterone properly right in the right amount. We're not jacking him up in the 2000s, but let's get that number up out of the basement so he feels better.

And we protect his heart at the same time. So yes, there's that lab value range. I really, I would say if I had a really sweet spot to be 809 hundred, something like.

But again, age dependent. Now we come over to the ladies. Oh, ladies, did you know that the bare bones minimal that I have for, an optimal testosterone.

This is total now. Not free. Total testosterone is a 50. I see my ladies needing to be at least at a total testosterone of a 50 or slightly above. Some women do better when they're close to 100.

They tell me, don't take my testosterone. This is where I'm a rock star. But at least above a 50 lab core cut you off at a 48. So if you're actually coming in optimal, you're getting flagged high.

And yes, to your point, doctor Jack, if a postmenopausal women, you know, it cracks me up on the labs. They actually have a separate range for post-menopausal.

As if like if you're here you can have no hormones. And that's totally normal. Well, I mean, I guess it is normal, but it sure as hell is an optimal. So for postmenopausal ladies, they I have literally seen no detectable testosterone at less than one less than three.

And they're being told by their doctors that that's totally normal. It's fine because, you know, it's in the postmenopausal range and these poor women are just suffer.

I mean, they have no libido. They have excess body fat. They're losing muscle. They're losing strength, even if they're at the gym trying to live that healthy lifestyle.

They're like, you know, I'm working with a trainer, I'm kicking my own, I'm doing CrossFit, whatever. And I am weak. I see no muscle definition whatsoever.

It starts affecting their brain. It starts affecting motivation, their drive to just get through the day and that not even aside from that, they're part health.

So I love testosterone alone. I think it is a vital hormone for both sexes, for not just looking, feeling and performing your best, but also for protecting your heart.

And then how do we decide when to add in the estrogen and progesterone? Can we sometimes just do things along with testosterone? How? And I know this is it's a very difficult thing and each one is individualized, but is there an opportunity for testosterone by itself?

Yeah. You know, age dependent. So where all see testosterone being used in and of itself and having benefits really in a woman's 30s, 40s as testosterone starts to decline, then we can use testosterone alone therapy.

And then, you know, as the years go by, perimenopause, the menopause starts to happen. That's when we will bring in the estradiol and progesterone. Progesterone also helps with a-fib.

So I've actually seen that help calm a person down. Or if they're having heart palpitations that sometimes. And I'll defer to you as well on that topic.

Progesterone really helps with that as well. Helps with anxiety. It helps with sleep. It's anti proliferative protects against cancer. So all the different hormones have their benefits.

But I mean yes to your to your point to your question, we can use testosterone alone to start and bring the other hormones in later. Excellent excellent excellent.

All right. Doctor Amy so much to unpack there. You know as well. And I think you know hopefully people learned a lot about how important thyroid hormone is about the thyroid antibodies and what is known as Hashimoto's.

And then of course, the, you know, testosterone story as well.

Where to Find Dr. Amy Horniman

So tell us how can people find out more about you and your work and your book and anything else about Doctor Amy? Absolutely. So you can go to Doctor amy.com.

So that's dramedy. And then you can also dive into the Thyroid Fixer podcast. Doctor Jack was a guest on that. We have 460 episodes in there. So you can pick and choose which topic you want a deep dive into.

And then our Facebook group is the Just Fix Your Thyroid Facebook group. And in there you can actually post your labs and we will give you feedback, just kind of telling you what direction that you really need to go and what questions you need to ask your doc.

Fantastic, fantastic. Doctor Amy Hahnemann, thank you so much for being on this, episode inside of the heart Attack and Stroke Recovery and Prevention Summit.

It's a long mouthful of words, but, that's the way that it goes, because we're trying to, reach all those people that are, are affected. So, again, thank you so much, doctor Amy.

We'll see you back with another show in the summit. Thank you.