Why Is It So Hard to Lose Weight After 40? Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Normal doesn't mean optimal, right? We're taught to look at the reference range, but maybe you don't live perfectly in the difference range and these reference ranges are changing all the time and they're really big.

And we want to at trends, if over years, you've been going to the doctor year after year and the trend is going in wrong direction, that's a sign. It doesn't have to be out of the normal range for it to not be functioning optimally.

Welcome to the This Is Not Normal podcast. I'm Dr. Neb and I am nurse practitioner Nicole. If you don't feel like yourself anymore and you've been told it's just part of aging, you have come to right place.

Let's uncover what's really going on because you deserve to love the way you feel. Why is it so much harder to lose weight over 40? Hey, Dr. Deb here.

Hey nurse practitioner Nicole. And it really is true that things change. Yes, they are definitely changing and it's frustrating. We hear from patients all the time that are saying they're doing all the right things.

They're still going to the gym, they are still eating all of the foods, getting enough rest, but the scale just keeps going up and the jeans don't fit and nothing feels right and it's really frustrating.

It's one thing if you're eating at the drive thru three times a day, okay fine, that's not usually the case. Sometimes you intermittent fast, you don't even eat till later on in the day and then you have the salad with the grilled chicken for lunch and like you're doing all the things and when you stand in a closet in morning and you are looking at all of the clothes and none of them fit, they are all pinchy and they're not you know so confident and not comfortable and want to go out and buy a whole new wardrobe.

It's so frustrating. I think, too, women are also complaining, especially that the distribution of the weight has changed. All of a sudden, it's that midlife muffin top, right?

It's all in the midsection, or even breast tissue changes, firm, right? Everything just feels looser, saggier, and all the things. And the frustration I think also lies in that there aren't answers, all your labs look normal, your doctors saying, we hear this from patients all I went to my doctor, I complained that I'd gained 10 pounds in the last year and they check on my labs and everything is normal.

And they're saying, great, everything's normal, but you don't feel good. You don' feel normal? I remember in particular, there was one patient who came in to see us and she was so angry.

I tell this story a lot because she so was angry when she came and I know she wasn't angry at me. Like she hadn't even met me yet. She's angry with the circumstances.

because she was trying everything to lose weight. She was not eating any of her favorite foods. She was forcing herself to go to the gym even though she's exhausted all the time.

Like she, was doing everything and the scale was, not budging. So obviously something has to be wrong. Right. So she went to her doctor and she'd hold her doctors to do all of the labs.

It's like, let's figure this out. Check everything. And he sent her this lovely portal message. Hey, congratulations. Everything's fine. And she just like wanted to reach through the computer and rip out his throat because he's so over it.

And fortunately, his wife had been our patient, and so he actually referred her to us. And when we did evaluate her, we found all kinds of things that were wrong that we're holding her back.

But it was really, really frustrating. No, this is something we hear over and over, and it just keeps getting worse and worse, right? It's five pounds and then it's 10 pounds, then its 15 pounds.

It is year over year, so from 40 to 45 to 50, it is just getting worst and worst. And it becomes almost like you are out of control, defeated. You kind of give up and you feel like, why?

Nobody has answers. Why do you all enjoy the pizza? Because nothing is working. talk to somebody recently who was feeling just that way like she just throw your hands up in the air and like nothing was working why even bother anymore but she did go to see her doctor and she's like laying it all out about how she feels.

And what her doctor told her is that she had difficulty with her relationship with food. And she or somebody who's eating super healthy, like she's not eating crappy foods.

Right. I think doctors sometimes feel sort of helpless. Agree. And they don't have enough time, right? They've got this limited amount of time and they're trying to make sure they do everything else.

Yeah. And, they, don t have the tools or the answers. Let's be honest, because I've been in this seat myself, like, as the patient is, you kind of know that they re looking at you and you're saying, and I'm not eating too much and, I m not snacking.

They're thinking, yes, You are. For me, it was my thyroid. But, okay, so let's talk about five hormones that can mess up your metabolism and make you gain weight over 40. All right.

Let's start with estrogen, right? So estrogen absolutely has so much to do with our weight. And we know that because as we cycle, when we're in our younger years, we can see that we gain a couple pounds right before a period and then our period comes and we drop it off.

So it has a lot to do with bloating and fluid retention. But as we start to get into our 40s and 50s in perimenopause and menopausal, estrogen affects all the other hormones, but it really affects insulin signaling.

And insulin's our fat-storing hormone. So if our estrogen's going down, our insulin can be going up, and that can cause a lot of problems. Now, in perimenopause, estrogen is on this hormonal havoc roller coaster, it's coming up and down.

Fluctuations in hormones are often what is causing weight to be difficult to get off, right? It's not that you're gaining, gaining and gaining. It may just be that it is going and it has a lot to do with the really wide fluctuations.

We can see estrogen in very, very high numbers, one month in a perimenopausal woman and then very low in the next month. And it's those delta changes that can be a problem as well.

Yeah. So one of the first things that kind of happens as we get into peri-menopause is that our progesterone level starts to go down, but our estrogen levels can still be the same.

It can up, it can down. it could be all around. But we call that relative estrogen dominance. When you're still making some estrogen, your proestrogen is down And when you have relative estrogen dominance, that's when we really tend to gain weight in our hips, thighs, and butt.

So listen, you don't have to be in perimenopause. There's lots of women who are sort of more pear-shaped, small waist, flat tummy, but kind of carrying their weight and their caboose.

But when hit perimentopaus, yeah, can get worse. And then as we get closer to hitting menopause on the whole, our estrogen is going to drop and it's going drop to the bottom of the ocean when we hit menoppause.

So like relatively higher estrogen can make us gain weight, but low estrogen makes us really gain weigh and especially around our middle. Estrogen is what gives us a waist.

It gives that curve. And so what happens after menapause is we tend to get straight. If you think about like a little old lady and little man, you're looking at granny and grandpa from the back.

So estrogen and progesterone balance, that's important. Okay. Thyroid. You've got to take thyroid. So thyroid sets your metabolic rate. It tells your body to burn more calories.

it tells you body generate more energy. And it is really common for your thyroid to maybe not be working as well as it should. So if your thyroid is a little bit under functioning, even if it's not completely off the deep end full-blown hypothyroid, if its under-functioning, we tend to feel more tired, because we're not generating as much energy.

We tend feel to more cold, cause we are not as generating much heat, and we struggle with our weight because were just not burning as many calories. And trying to lose weight when your thyroid is low is kinda like beating your head against the wall.

So women will go into their doctor and they will say, I'm tired all the time, I'm wearing a sweater in July in North Carolina. I am constipated. My hair is falling out.

There's a list of symptoms. But what we are trained to do is we measure a test. It's called the TSH. And if it's normal, then what are taught is it can't be your thyroid.

Therefore, it must be that you're depressed, lazy or you just need to get up off the couch and go exercise some more, which is like exactly what every exhausted person wants to hear.

But what we know is that there are a lot of nuances in thyroid function. There's more than just the TSH. And if we can look at the big picture, there's a lotta things that we could do to optimize thyroid functions, get your metabolism back on track again so that you can maintain your weight and feel like a normal human being.

I think it's important too to touch on the fact that normal doesn't mean optimal, right? We have, we're taught, to look at the reference range, but maybe you don't live perfectly in the preference range and these reference ranges are changing all the time and they're really big.

And while, and we want to at trends, if over years, If you've been going to the doctor year after year and the trend is going in wrong direction, that's a sign, out of the normal range for it to not be functioning optimally.

So maybe your thyroid gland is fine. Yeah. And it's making the perfect amount of thyroid hormone. But if that thyroid hormone's going around and around in your blood, and your body can't use it, if you can activate it into the T3 that your needs, then you have all the symptoms of low thyroid, including gaining weight.

And with thyroid you just gain it everywhere. But your labs could be normal. Your labs can still be normally. The reasons for why you don't activate and utilize your thyroid gland can be if your got estrogen dominance.

If you've got an imbalance in the estrogen and progesterone, it can if have a problem with cortisol, too much stress. If you have inflammation, toxins, if you had the wrong bacteria in your gut, you're missing certain vitamins and minerals.

So the treatment isn't necessarily here. You need a thyroid pill. Let's fix these things so that your thyroid hormone can do its job and get your metabolism back online.

But if your only checking a screening hormone, You don't have the answers you want. Okay, so we got estrogen, progesterone, and thyroid. Next up, let's talk cortisol.

Yeah, cortisol is our main stress hormone. It goes up when we have times of stress, which is normal. That's what we want it to do. have an injury or an infection or you have to slam the brake on the car to not hit the card in front of you or if major things going on at work or at home, we want cortisol to go up in small amounts for small periods of time.

when cortisol is chronically elevated, that's the problem, right? So chronical elevated cortisol, is going to age us prematurely, it's going push us into things like diabetes and dementia.

And so it is unhealthy to have this constantly elevated because it a really important regulating hormone, It's gonna regulate how you sleep and how when you wake up, its gonna regular your blood sugar, so goes back to that insulin, Its going regulate your immune function, but it regulates all the other hormones.

So when cortisol's off, it absolutely has an effect on the thyroid, on insulin, and on estrogen progesterone. When I talk to patients, I say it is the neck that turns the head on all of the hormones, so if cortisol is not working well because you've got chronic infection, or you got a lot of inflammation, you have a stress in your life, then it's going to be really hard to get anything else to work when cortisol is chronically high.

And everybody knows that cortisol causes belly fat, and when you go through menopause, thyroid problems, all of these things compound. And one of the things that you mentioned was sleep.

So, when you're going through perimenopause, you don't sleep, and when are you going to menopausal, You don' sleep when your thyroid is off. You know, sleep with cortisol is all you know.

It's like when the insulin is on you, don's say, When you sleep you gain weight. so it's this whole picture that matters. We've talked a lot about insulin, but let's come back to insulin because this is arguably maybe the most important one at all.

Insulin is the one that regulates your blood sugar and if your isn't so great, if your insulin's not working as well as it needs to, your body will make more and more insulin in order to get your blood sugar normal.

And so at this point, you walk into your doctor's office, they measure your own bloodsugar, and they say congratulations, that your labs are normal, but if they don't measure insulin level, then you might not realize that insulin is really high and it's taking all that extra insulin to take your sugar down.

And this is a problem because insulin is the fat storing hormone and it tells your body to store fat, especially right around your waist. So we see this a lot.

Women will come in, their blood sugar's normal, and they're really struggling with their weight and got pretty decent lifestyle habits, but maybe because of toxins in the environment or genes or maybe their diet's not as good as they think because there's a lotta hidden sugar and stuff.

But for whatever reason, they have some insulin resistance. Right. 24-7 constantly telling their cells to store calories. So here you are, you're chewing on your celery sticks, your walking around the block and your next door neighbor loses like 10 pounds and you've lost nothing.

And you doing all the right things. Again, if all they're checking is your blood sugar level, we're going to miss the answer. And truth be told too, the reference range for insulin is gigantic, right?

And so optimal and normal are not the same. There's no warning, like you're normal until you are diabetic. Like there's not pre-diabetes levels technically on the chart for the insulin.

But it doesn't usually get checked anyway. So the moral of the story here is, if you were trying to lose weight and you can just eat less and exercise more and the pounds drop off, yay!

But if that's There probably are a number of reasons underlying why it's difficult. They are solvable. They can help you get back into balance, but you just need to find the right help and you need just find right answers and it is possible and don't give up.

Thank you for listening to This Is Not Normal. If today's conversation helped you realize that you do not have to put up with feeling this way, follow the podcast, leave us a review and share it with someone who needs to hear it.

And if you're ready to take your next steps, then schedule your free discovery call at signaturewellness.org. This podcast is for educational and informational purposes only and is not medical advice.

Always consult your physician or qualified healthcare professional before making changes to your diet, lifestyle, medications, or treatment plan. The views expressed by guests are their own.

If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call your local emergency number immediately.