

By *Bobbie Barbrey, RPh, CCN*

Some months ago I had a casual conversation with Rebecca—an assumed name for a long-time friend and customer—who knows of my passion for helping people find their path to optimal health.

She began sharing a number of her health concerns, such as weight gain, low energy, and losing a zest for life—something that was always natural and fun for her. And she told me that her doctor was watching her blood sugar level as it had increased with each lab test. Does this sound like you?

I asked a few basic questions. “How do you eat?”

She responded: “I pay close attentions to what I eat. I start the day with a fruit smoothie, and mid-morning I have low fat yogurt. I always have whole grain bread at lunch and often have brown rice with dinner. I’ve been reading about healthy eating on the Internet and I think I’m doing well.”

Oops, I thought. “Rebecca,” I said, “you’re starting your day with an abundance of sugar, and your blood sugar is shooting up first thing in the morning. Then it’s going to crash. When your blood sugar plunges, your energy level will drop. In addition, the grains you eat throughout the day convert directly to sugar.”

When we looked at her whole diet, it became apparent that the foods she was eating, which she thought were healthy, were really sabotaging her efforts to improve her health.

We started our process of developing a detailed, custom health plan for her by identifying foods that would allow her to stabilize her blood sugar, keeping her energy more even, and give her body the nutrients it needs to repair and heal.

Then she shared with me that she sometimes has a bit of reflux so she was taking Nexium, by prescription, to help reduce her stomach acid. Many people don’t realize how beneficial and needed stomach acid is. It is essential for breaking down our food into the nutrients that our body needs. She was reducing her body’s ability to do this when her nutrient intake was already compromised due to poor food choices. Additionally, Nexium and other acid blockers will deplete magnesium, B12, and folic acid. There are better and healthier ways to help her with reflux!

And there was more. She shared that because of a family history of high cholesterol, her doctor had put her on a statin drug. I asked her if she was taking CoQ10 and she said that she was not. Here was another likely contributor to her fatigue. Statins drugs have long been known to deplete the body of CoQ10. Without enough CoQ10 many people experience muscle pain and weakness in addition to general fatigue. We would definitely be adding CoQ10 to her regime until we could get to the source of her elevated lipids.

MILD DEPRESSION

We discussed her reduced “zest for life,” a sign of mild depression. Her doctor suggested she take Lexapro. “But I thought I would check with you first.”

I replied, “Let’s consider all options. While some people do need an antidepressant, many times we can increase your levels of se-



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rotonin, the antidepressant neurotransmitter, without using prescription medication. Did you know studies have shown that exercise is as effective or even more effective than many prescription medications in reducing depression? Let’s see what we can do over the next 60 to 90 days by making simple changes like increasing exercise and improving nutrition.”

She was open to that, and thought it was a good idea. I also told her that most of the serotonin is made in the gut and it needs B1, B2, B6, folic acid, and magnesium to create it. Could the Nexium, which depletes folic acid and magnesium, be contributing to her mild depression?

Rebecca mentioned that she thought some of her health issues might be genetic. Genetics are getting more and more press as the science behind it is better understood. But perhaps the most surprising part is how little genetics play in most chronic disease. “Let’s talk about your blood sugar,” I said. “I understand that your mother and sister both have diabetes. That may lead you to think that it’s a genetic issue. In over 90 percent of the patients I work with, however, it’s not a genetic issue. It’s a direct result of their diet and lifestyle. The real reason that it runs in families is that families often have similar eating and lifestyle patterns.”

And I added: “I was a bit disturbed when you said that your doctor was watching your blood sugar level. That was your cue to take action! I want you to check your blood glucose levels every morning for a week and

let me know your readings. Diabetes is much easier to prevent than to treat. “

We looked at a three pronged approach to optimal health for Rebecca that will have profound effects on her well-being. The foundation is what she eats. This will balance her blood sugar, which will improve her energy. It will also increase the nutrients that are available to her body so it has the building blocks to repair and restore her health.

Next we identified the supplements that will best support her journey and help her body to recover and rebuild. And lastly we found a way to build exercise into her daily life. This will also help keep her blood sugar under control and as an added bonus it will likely help her mild depression.”

Rebecca was surprised that by just improving her diet and increasing her nutrition and exercise she would be able to address so many different symptoms. I explained to her that the body knows how to be in balance when given the right materials. It will work the best it can with what it has but when it is missing nutrients, the symptoms that present may be different in different people depending on the weakest system is in that body.

After just one month of working together, Rebecca has already lost weight, and has more energy and less depression. She is very encouraged. Hers is actually a very typical case. Simple but targeted changes can make a dramatic difference. Address the basics and get started on the right path. Then in six weeks, with the basics in place,

we can be more aggressive with the remaining issues that are still presenting.

How many of your symptoms are due to a lack of vitamins and minerals, exacerbated by a nutrient robbing diet? It was the case with Rebecca and I am sure it is part of many people’s symptom picture. As with Rebecca, it is not always easy to sort through all the information by yourself. We love to help people get back on the path to optimal health. Call to schedule an appointment for your custom plan. **h&h**

Bobbie Barbrey, RPh, is the owner of Medicap Pharmacy in North Raleigh, a full-service retail pharmacy, which also offers compounding and nutritional counseling. He is also a Certified Clinical Nutritionist (CCN). “I work with a lot of people who have a sincere desire to be well and to stay healthy for their entire lives. Often what they need most of all is a plan. Many people underestimate what they can accomplish by themselves because they don’t know where to begin. I am honored to help them develop their unique path to good health.”

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