

5 Sneaky Health Issues Doctors Miss — but Should Be on Your Radar

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If you've ever felt like your MD brushed off your concerns, but that the problem wasn't in fact in your head, you may be suffering from one of these often overlooked conditions. By Kathleen Rellihan



Sleep apnea

Fighting low energy is a normal part of a busy life, right? Not always. When fatigue becomes chronic, it may be a sign of a lurking health disorder. "As women, we tend to brush off our symptoms, thinking they may be from overextending ourselves or taking on too much, but this may not be the case," says Dr. Lauren Weber, a physician at the Cleveland Clinic's Center for Specialized Women's Health. Depression, hypothyroidism, vitamin-D deficiency, diabetes, and sleep apnea are among

the issues Dr. Weber says could be the underlying reason for your fatigue. Sleep apnea is particularly common and worrisome because if left untreated, it can increase your risk for hypertension, stroke, and even heart attack. Focus on good sleep habits - like keeping the same bedtime every night and not watching TV in bed - and eat a well-balanced diet to combat fatigue. If you're still falling asleep at your desk or behind the wheel, it's a good idea to get tested for sleep apnea via a sleep study.

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Perimenopause or menopause

Hot flashes, night sweats, decreased sex drive - women might feel that these less-than-pleasant symptoms of perimenopause and menopause are just something that they have to cope with. But, that's not necessary, says Dr. Weber, who advises starting treatment as soon as possible. "The best time to get treated is within the first 10 years of menopause; there is actually a decreased cardiovascular risk associated with starting hormone therapy, which is the best treatment for moderate to severe menopause symptoms," says Dr. Weber. And if you needed another reason to quit - smokers are at higher risk for early menopause.

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Hypothyroidism

Are you tired, achy and finding it hard to lose that mysterious 10 pounds you gained? Intolerant to cold? Suffering from elevated cholesterol? Constipated? Dealing with unexplained infertility? These are all symptoms of a low thyroid, says Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic*. "In my 35 years as a physician, I have found that the majority of women who need thyroid hormone have normal blood testing," he says. If you have unexplained fatigue, and two to three of the other symptoms, you may be one of them, in which case Dr. Teitelbaum advises asking your doctor about trying thyroid hormone.

Fibromyalgia

If you have insomnia despite being utterly exhausted, widespread pain and "brain fog," you may have fibromyalgia, suggests Dr. Teitelbaum. The good news: It's now very treatable. "By restoring energy production with the S.H.I.N.E Protocol (Sleep, Hormones, Immunity, Nutrition, Exercise), our study found that 90 percent of patients improved with an average 91 percent increase in quality of life," says Dr. Teitelbaum. The strategy can help support recovery when dealing with fibromyalgia symptoms, and aid in maintaining healthy energy levels when you're well. There is no blood test for fibromyalgia, so a conversation with your doctor about your symptoms is the best route to diagnosis.

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Prediabetes

Even if your blood sugar tests come back normal and you avoid sugary foods, you're not necessarily in the clear for developing diabetes. "Many people with prediabetes don't even know they have it," says digestive care expert Benda Watson. "But with the epidemic of obesity and diabetes - also known as diabetes - controlling the situation before it gets out of hand is imperative." Watson advises even those with normal blood sugar levels to be tested for high insulin levels, which could put you at risk for developing diabetes and heart disease. And like with all these sneaky health issues, eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly and limiting stress is key. "Exercise helps to stabilize blood sugar levels, and stress reduction helps with a major underlying contributor to chronic disease," says Weber. Whether it is kickboxing or a painting class, find a calming activity that you enjoy, and do it regularly for a lasting impact on your overall health.

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