

"I was exhausted all the time"



I got on my scale. I got off. I got on again. No mistake. I had gained ten pounds in three months.

What was going on? My eating habits hadn't changed, and I was working out. That wasn't all. My skin was a mess and my hair was falling out. I was only 28 years old at that time, in 2001, and I was exhausted.

My sister had experienced similar symptoms a few years before and was diagnosed with an underactive thyroid gland, so I asked my doctor for a blood test. The results, he told me, were normal.

But my symptoms persisted. When I saw my gynecologist a few months later, he also said my tests were fine. His suggestion: Try vitamins and relaxation exercises. Instead, I opted for a third—and fourth—opinion. I made another appointment with my internist, this time for a complete physical, and an appointment

with an endocrinologist, Martin Barandes, M.D., who is affiliated with St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City and who also sees patients near my Long Island home.

At last, an answer. I did have hypothyroidism, Dr. Barandes told me. The physician's assistant at my internist's also found small lumps in my neck, which turned out to be thyroid nodules. (These are usually nothing, but in my case, they are related to my condition.)

So why had the other doctors failed to make the diagnosis? They were not as expert at interpreting the blood test. By some standards, I might be considered "normal." But a specialist like Dr. Barandes, who sees so many cases of thyroid disorder, could detect the subtle difference.

I began taking a low dose of thyroid medication and, within a month, all my symptoms were gone. I have stayed healthy since, and last October, I gave birth to a full-term, full-size (eight pounds five ounces) baby daughter.

—Karen J. Bannan