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BLOOD TESTS DON'T NECESSARILY REVEAL, "THE TRUTH".
REFERENCE RANGES DON'T ACKNOWLEDGE, "HOW YOU FEEL".

- **Blood tests for hormones can be unreliable due to external factors such as the ingestion of drugs. e.g. the birth control pill.**
- **Physicians often ignore blood test results that are within the 'normal reference range'. Sadly these un-addressed results often still contribute to reduced fertility, weight gain and other distressing symptoms.**
- **Symptomatic diagnosis as an alternative to blood testing is nothing new. Your GP, gynaecologist, and nearly all health professionals have used this technique for over 100 years.**
- **Healthy Nature – home of BUMP fertility, has used a proven form of symptomatic diagnosis for the past 10 years.**

It is extraordinary that more than 100 years since the first treatment of hormonal imbalances, debate is continuing about their diagnosis and management. A traditional way to test hormone levels has been with a blood test that measures the blood serum or blood plasma content of the hormones. These tests can be somewhat unreliable because they do not give your biologically active hormone levels. The tests are only able to measure 1-9 percent of the biologically active hormones circulating in your body. Ninety percent or more remains undetected by these results!

Gynaecologists have found that blood tests for hormones are unreliable, and diagnosis should rely more upon the description of the symptoms one is "feeling". The results of diagnostic blood tests can be altered by external factors such as ingestion of drugs (such as the birth control pill); and internal factors such as abnormal fluctuations.

Reference ranges for hormonal function tests are based on statistical averages. They are not based on standards of biological activity and do not account for individual variation and fluctuation. Each individual has a unique pattern of hormone function that should be considered in conjunction with any standardised tests. An individual's ideal reference range is often much narrower than the current clinical reference ranges. Accordingly, a test result within laboratory reference limits is not necessarily normal for an individual.

There is a growing awareness in the medical community that the current reference range for determining what is a "normal" TSH is too wide. Based on new data, the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists recommends that the normal reference range for the TSH blood test be reduced by nearly half, down to 0.50-2.50 from the current 0.50-5.00. Other sources suggest the new upper range should be 3.33. (The higher the number, the more hypothyroid you are.) Until all physicians and labs can agree on a new range for TSH, many women will continue to be frustrated by inaccurate diagnosis.

If you are still feeling unwell or are finding it difficult to conceive, do not accept that a blood test is 'normal' just because the result falls within the reference range. Some patients seeking an explanation for feeling "below par" are disappointed when blood tests are normal. Unable to accept that there may be psychosocial reasons for their symptoms, they believe that hormonal imbalances may exist even though their serum concentrations are "within a normal range".

Symptoms of hormonal imbalance such as reduced fertility, weight gain, low mood, cold sensitivity and fatigue are often linked to specific hormones. As successfully utilised by BUMP fertility, symptomatic diagnostic techniques simply means the symptoms you are showing are indications of imbalance within the body and are usually noticed by you on an ongoing basis – thus they can give a more consistent result.

Many conditions and diseases have symptoms. A cough is a symptom of an upper respiratory infection. Pain is a symptom of a physical problem. When someone has the common symptoms associated with a hormonal imbalance they are symptomatic. We urge you to make sure that your symptoms are being documented & heard. Tell your practitioner of all of your symptoms. Don't "isolate" your symptoms but look at the whole spectrum. Whether your blood tests are "normal" or not, if you feel as if you are falling apart and "nothing seems to be working properly", chances are you are right!

Healthy Nature - Home of BUMP fertility and MassAttack is a recognised specialist in the natural support of fertility and in the treatment of hormonal, weight and health conditions. We don't ignore the symptoms, we address their source.

Narelle Stegehuis, CEO of Healthy Nature, is a practicing Naturopath specializing in natural fertility support and in treatment programs for women with hormonal imbalance, such as PCOS, Fibroids, Endometriosis & Thyroid imbalance. Uniquely for patient convenience her programs are also offered via the Internet. She is both an accomplished writer and recent recipient of the Australian Naturopathic Excellence Award 2006. Visit the Bump fertility website at www.bumpfertility.com.au