

Myth vs. Fact

Wilson's Temperature Syndrome

Sluggishness, trouble concentrating, aches and pains—most of us have these symptoms from time to time, but we can't always pinpoint the cause. "Wilson's Temperature Syndrome" has been suggested as a cause for dozens of common complaints such as fatigue, headaches, and depression. Although some health books and websites suggest this is a real illness, there is no medical proof that Wilson's temperature syndrome is, in fact, a real disease. (Wilson's syndrome should not be confused with Wilson's disease, a real medical condition that causes too much copper to build up in the body.)

This fact sheet was developed to address myths about Wilson's temperature syndrome and provide facts about its history and relation to medically proven diseases.

Overview

- E. Denis Wilson, M.D.'s theory says that stress and illness results in a hormone imbalance that causes a lack of the thyroid hormone T3, resulting in low body temperature and slow metabolism. This theory is not supported by science.
- No test can detect Wilson's syndrome, and it is *not* an accepted medical diagnosis based on scientific facts.
- The recommended treatment for Wilson's temperature syndrome, WT3, is made in specialty pharmacies, and the ingredients may be unknown or harmful.
- There are no well-designed research studies comparing the supposed benefits of WT3 to placebo (inactive sugar pills).
- Too much of the thyroid hormone T3 can stress the heart and damage bones.
- Some symptoms said to be part of Wilson's syndrome may be due to serious medical problems that require prompt medical attention. The wrong treatment may harm your health. It is important to find out what is

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really causing your symptoms, and have them treated correctly.

What is "Wilson's temperature syndrome"?

Dr. Wilson described Wilson's temperature syndrome in 1990 as the presence of many different symptoms along with a low body temperature and slowing metabolism. By metabolism, we mean the way our bodies convert the foods we eat into energy. Dr. Wilson believes the syndrome is caused by illness, injury, or stress.

The many possible symptoms of Wilson's syndrome are common and non-specific, meaning they can occur in many diseases or even be part of a normal, busy life. Supporters of Wilson's syndrome believe it is a form of thyroid hormone deficiency, even though low hormone levels are not detected in blood tests.

Thyroid hormones

The thyroid gland, located in the neck, produces two thyroid hormones, T3 and T4. Most T3, however, is made outside the thyroid gland as the body changes T4 into the more active T3. T3 has an effect on almost every organ system in the body and is needed to sustain life and keep us well.

What is Dr. Wilson's theory?

During periods of stress or illness, more T4 than normal is changed into an inactive form of T3 called reverse T3 or rT3. Dr. Wilson believes that long-term stress leads to too much rT3 in the body, which in turn keeps T4 from being converted into enough active T3 to fuel the body's energy needs. This supposed thyroid hormone deficiency—undetectable in blood tests—



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lowers body temperature and triggers many non-specific symptoms.

Supporters of Wilson's temperature syndrome believe this condition can be reversed by taking Wilson's T3 (WT3), a special time-released form of T3. Several cycles of WT3 are said to raise body temperature to 98.6 degrees F. After a few months, the person is slowly taken off WT3 and, the theory goes, normal production of T3 starts up again. The amount of T3 recommended by Dr. Wilson is much higher than the amount of T3 needed for normal body function.

Also, Dr. Wilson claims that taking special herbal and nutritional supplements—called WTSmed supplements—along with WT3 can help ease symptoms like rapid heartbeat that can be caused by high doses of T3.

What are the facts about Wilson's temperature syndrome?

- Even during illness, there is 40 times more T4 in the body than rT3—more than enough to produce plenty of active T3.
- Normal body temperature varies among different people, and changes throughout the day in any given person, so a temperature below 98.6 degrees is not necessarily abnormal.
- The Wilson's temperature syndrome website cites only one study published in a respected medical journal that supports the theory that time-released T3 relieves symptoms. However, the study didn't take into account the "placebo effect"—the tendency of people treated with a placebo (an inactive substance such as a sugar pill) to report improvement in their symptoms, based only on their belief that the treatment will help them. The absence of a placebo-treated group in this study doesn't allow a comparison of which effects might be due to WT3 and which might simply be the patient's expectation for improvement.

**Too much T3
can stress the
heart and
damage bones.**

- Higher than normal doses of T3 can be harmful for several reasons:
 - High doses can trigger abnormal heart rhythms and other heart problems that may be harmful and, in some people, life threatening.
 - Long-term treatment can cause loss of calcium from the bone, increasing the risk for fractures.
 - Very high doses of thyroid hormones given to pregnant women may harm the baby's brain development.
- While the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved short-acting T3 for treatment of some thyroid conditions, drug companies have been unable to make an FDA-approved time-released T3 product. WT3 must be made in special compounding pharmacies and the actual ingredients and effects of these products are uncertain. Their use is not recommended.

What should you do if you've been told you have Wilson's temperature syndrome?

Doctors urge you not to accept an unproven diagnosis like Wilson's syndrome. Your symptoms could be caused by a serious health problem. To take care of your health, it is important to get a correct diagnosis and proper medical treatment.

For more information on Wilson's Temperature Syndrome, please read the public health statement issued by the American Thyroid Association at: www.thyroid.org/professionals/publications/statements/99_11_16_wilsons.html.

Also, please visit the Mayo Clinic website at: www.mayoclinic.com/health/wilsons-syndrome/AN01728.

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