**The things I secretly wish my doctor would test…**

**Is there more to poop than meets the eye?**

Yes, in fact, there is.  Our GI system is very important to every aspect of our health. It breaks down and absorbs nutrients. It helps us make vitamins and even neurotransmitters. In fact, it may be our SECOND BRAIN! It helps our immune system recognize what is a friend or foe and kills microbes before they attack us!

Our GI system is a home to trillions of friendly bacteria that carry out many activities that are beneficial to us. The kind of friendly bacteria we have may even determine how healthy or unhealthy we are. Yet, we rarely get asked by our doctors about our poops. Well, I like to get to know YOUR POOP and how often you let it out. That’s right…you can giggle.

So, here we go!

Is your poop:

Soft or hard?

Formed or liquid?

Undigested food particles?

Blood tinged? Mucus tinged?

How often do you have a bowel movement? Once or twice daily? Once or twice weekly? Having bowel movements daily or even three times daily is a healthy way of eliminating waste and detoxifying your body. If you are not pooping daily, you may have a problem. Your stool should be formed but it should not be hard, and you should not be pooping pellets nor having watery stool. This may simply mean you are not drinking enough water, or you may have an imbalance your GI tract. And how would you know if you have an imbalance, you ask? Well, there are tests to find this out and I make this available to all my patients…because I care about your poop.  I’m sure you will not find a doctor that says that often!  LOL

**Have you had your vitamin D levels checked?**

Vitamin D is also known as the sunshine vitamin. Ironic, because vitamin D is not a vitamin nor a nutrient; it is a hormone produced by the body in the skin from a reaction with ultraviolet light.

Many of us spend most of our time indoors and need to obtain this nutrient from our diet. Therefore, it is considered a vitamin for these individuals.

I prefer to get my nutrition from food whenever possible, but vitamin D presents some obstacles. Food sources are minimal, and this is the major reason why dairy and other food products are fortified with vitamin D. You can get your vitamin D from the sun and have one less supplement to take for a few months. Get out in the sun! But, do not get sunburned. Vitamin D production is already maximized before your skin turns pink and further exposure does not increase levels of vitamin D but may increase your risk of skin cancer.  And people with darker skin tones my need to stay in sun 5-10 minutes longer.

There are many different “optimal ranges” being recommended from the medical and scientific experts. Most doctors will tell you that vitamin D level of 30 is enough. BUT I dare to say it is not. Most current studies and research indicate that we should strive for our levels to fall between 60 and 100.

1. Before starting to supplement with vitamin D, have your 25 OH vitamin D levels checked. This will give you and your doctor an idea of how much you may need to supplement.

2. Use a product containing vitamin D3, preferable in capsule or drop form. To improve absorption, vitamin D should be taken with food that contains some fat, since it is fat soluble.

3. Have your level rechecked every three months. Remember, vitamin D is a hormone, so it fluctuates for everyone differently, and obviously seasonal changes affect it as well.

4. For those who have chronic infections, autoimmune conditions you may have to always take vitamin D. However, you will always need to discuss this with your doctor.

Bottom line on Vitamin D: it is very important to know what your levels are and not just guess.

**How is YOUR THYROID working?**

Huh? My thyroid? But my TSH is normal…Yawn…

Thyroid function is not only checking your TSH lab value. BECAUSE it may FALL WITHIN the normal range, but your thyroid hormones may not be normal. And, you may have antibodies attacking your thyroid gland and not even know it! Have you had this happen to you when your doctor “checks your thyroid” and it is “normal” BUT YOU do not feel “normal”? You feel sluggish, tired, and depressed. Ah, and you do not poop every day. You cannot seem to lose weight but you’re able to gain it just by looking at food. “It’s not your thyroid,” you were told. In order to see the full picture and how your thyroid works you should have additional labs such as free T4, free T3, Reverse T3 along with antibodies such as anti-peroxidase antibody and anti-thyroglobulin antibody. All of these can give a much clearer picture of your thyroid function. Anyone of them can be abnormal when the other is normal and still cause your body problems. It can indicate you may need more iodine, vitamin D, zinc, and selenium in your diet to improve your thyroid hormone levels.  Or you may have a heavy metal toxicity! Having thyroid antibodies indicates your body is producing antibodies to your thyroid AND you need to find out WHY! But that is for another can of open worms… So, test don’t guess! And make sure your doctor knows which tests to order.

Don’t get me wrong. Most doctors become doctors because they have great hearts and want to help people. They have dedicated their lives to serve others. Doctors deserve respect for such dedication. You also deserve a doctor who just doesn’t stop when the diagnosis is made, and a “disease” is found. You deserve a doctor who also asks, “Why this disease happened and how can I stop it or reverse it?” You deserve a doctor who has advanced and the latest diagnostic tools at her disposal to find the root cause of your problems and not just give you a pill for an ill, but help you get cured. And this is what Functional Medicine Doctor does – she gets to the root cause. Because you deserve to know WHY!

Are you ready for some answers?  Call our clinic to schedule an appointment at (405)265-2610 or go to our website newlifemedicine.com and register as a new patient under “Patient Portal”.