

### Doctors Don't Always Listen—Shirley M.'s Story

For the first 21 years of my life I was healthy and skinny as a rail. I weighed around 103 pounds. Although I developed asthma as a teenager, other than that, I didn't have a lot of medical problems.

All of that changed after I had my first baby. That's when my weight began to fluctuate and I started experiencing painful headaches. I went from a size 3 to a size 13, and the headaches began affecting my ability to function. After my second pregnancy I went up to a size 18 and the headaches got even worse. I tried living on aspirin to control the pain, but it didn't work.

At the age of 45 I hit a wall with my weight. I'd always followed the Dr. Atkins diet to lose weight, but suddenly it didn't work anymore. So I tried different things. I tried eating small portions, eating low fat, low sugar, whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables. I tried eating yogurt and popcorn and oatmeal. I thought these foods were good for me and would help me, but all they did was make me bigger.

As I got older my asthma attacks went out of control. It almost seemed as though the more weight I gained, the worse the asthma got. I started carrying my inhaler with me all of the time.

After my third baby I had gained so much weight I lost all the muscle control in my tummy. I was pear-shaped. I had skinny legs, skinny arms, and a huge stomach. My doctor at the time told me that if I tried to carry another baby I'd probably drag it on the ground so I decided not to have any more babies. I had my uterus removed. That was in 1988.

I had other medical problems at that time as well. I had to have a bladder operation—it seemed like everything was falling out of me! One day I had an attack, doubling over in pain, a very sharp pain in the whole stomach. I was taken to a doctor who diagnosed gallbladder and scheduled me for surgery. Unfortunately, after that surgery I had constant diarrhea. I also had high cholesterol. All my hormones had gone out of whack.

My doctor at the time prescribed Premarin for me and also Meridia, a diet pill for weight loss (I was up to a size 20). In an attempt to understand my failing health, I was reading a lot, and I got hold of some literature that was critical of Premarin. I shared it with this doctor. She told me it was nonsense. She said that since I did not have a uterus, I needed estrogen. She changed my Premarin to an estradiol patch, another type of estrogen.

I began waking up every morning with headaches. It got so that I dreaded going to sleep at night because I knew that when I woke up I'd have this excruciating pain. I had no energy and started experiencing hot flashes. When I discussed these symptoms with my doctor and suggested that the estradiol patch and the Meridia might not be helping me, she made me feel like a failure. It was as though it was my fault that I could not lose weight.

I was so worried about my failing health that I started talking to everyone I met looking for advice. Through a compounding pharmacist I found my way to Dr. Platt.

At our first meeting, Dr. Platt did a very thorough history on me. He wanted to know everything about my medical history, my parents' medical history, my sister, my husband, everything. He had me take a blood test on my first visit. He did a complete hormone panel and, after looking over the results, explained what was going on in my body. He told me that the food I had been eating was affecting my insulin levels. He explained what happens throughout the day when you eat those kinds of foods. He could see from my history and my blood tests that I was already making too much estrogen and certainly didn't need to take more. Dr. Platt was concerned about my daughter as well, since my family has a history of breast cancer and uterine cancer. He told me to stop taking the estradiol and the Meridia, and he put both me and my daughter on natural progesterone.

He told me that my other doctor wasn't lying to me; it's just that she was misinformed about natural hormones. He also gave me a book, *Metabolic Solutions*, that reviewed all the things that he told me about. He said I was to commit myself to a program that he would design for me. He said I would lose my weight, have more energy, and my headaches and hot flashes would probably go away too.

A nutritional counselor in his office set a goal weight for me and designed a meal plan that included shopping tips and foods to buy. He told me to wean myself off sugar and caffeine. The day after I saw the counselor I was at work and I started to get weaker and sicker until by evening I thought I might be dying. I called the counselor, who had Dr. Platt call me back immediately. Dr. Platt reassured me that it was just my body going through a detoxification process from sugar and caffeine. He said I'd be a lot better the next day, and sure enough, he was right.

I continue to go into Dr. Platt's office once a week. When I go in, they check my blood pressure and my urine to see how much fat I am burning. They weigh me, and I get a B12 shot.

It's been easy to stay on the diet and I've lost 60 pounds. Today I don't wake up with headaches any more—a miracle! My diarrhea's gone, no headaches, no asthma, and I have energy now. People tell me all the time that I look slimmer.

I really believe that the natural hormones have helped me the most. I'm able to control my eating now because I understand when and why I get hungry. Candy and caffeine just don't seem important to me anymore. I'm also not scared of getting out of control when I get to my goal weight. I used to be afraid of reaching my goal weight, thinking I would just gain it all back and then some, just like before. I now rely on the nutritional counselors at Dr. Platt's office because they always have good advice for me. They remind me that I'm going to be introducing carbohydrates one at a time, slowly, and that they will monitor the effects on me. I haven't reached my goal weight yet, but I already feel successful.