



**What Does My  
Thyroid Do -  
Part Two**

**Nisha Jackson, PhD**

## The Dr. Nisha Jackson Show: What Does My Thyroid Do - Part Two

Rusty Humphries: Welcome, my friend. It is *The Dr. Nisha Jackson Show*. Thyroid, stress, stress, thyroid. They go together, and what does that mean, and how bad is having something wrong with your thyroid? I'm Rusty Humphries. I'm your humble MC, and it appears I am the worst-case scenario for every single one of Dr. Nisha Jackson's programs lately. Low thyroid. It's just a ... what was the other one? Oh, low testosterone. I'm the poster boy. So if you'll look like this, you better go see her in the office.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: We're getting you back on track, though, and I'm excited for this journey for you.

Rusty Humphries: Okay. I'm excited too.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: We're going to overhaul your whole, your everything.

Rusty Humphries: Okay, good. Now last time we talked, we talked about thyroid and what it meant and what were the symptoms, and I did a lot of [mumble, mumble] check, sleepy, check.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Right.

Rusty Humphries: Rage, check. So there's a lot of that. I think a lot of people can check marks and think that maybe they have low thyroid, right?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Right, low thyroid. Just to recap from last time, your thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland. It's in your neck, right in the middle of your neck, here. It is very vulnerable to stress. It's very vulnerable to different types of stress, and that would include not sleeping chronically well at night, not eating well, having your blood sugar go up and down because your diet stinks. It could be that you have a lot of emotional stress. It could be that you're suffering from something else. It could be that your medication is causing stress, other medications causing stress on your body.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: There's a lot of things that go on with people that, over time, causes your thyroid to not function in an optimal level. Some of the symptoms of low thyroid – and I always focus on low thyroid, Rusty, because it's by far the most common problem today with the thyroid.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Some of the symptoms of low thyroid would be fatigue. I just want to go over these quickly. Fatigue or exhaustion, especially like hitting the wall in the afternoon. Your hair is really dry and falling out. Oh, by the way, hair. I was just thinking today, this is the most incredible phenomenon for women. You can start out looking in the makeup mirror in the morning, and you have no chin hairs, and then by, I swear to you, by five o'clock, you could have a chin hair, like one hair that's four inches long.

Rusty Humphries: You've never had a chin hair in your life.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: No, I swear to you. Of course I have, like every woman has. But of course, we have to get to it. And this is how women help each other like, "Hey, there's a hair there. You got to get it off your face."

Rusty Humphries: Yeah, so you've got that. We've got the ear hair, which is just ... I don't get it at all. I mean, I'm a big supporter of the Lord, but there's a couple of bad design flaws that I'd like to have a little chat with him about.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: By the way, your hair looks really good right now just sticking up.

Rusty Humphries: That's good. That's really nice. That's working for me. All right, keep going. I'll fix the hair.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Okay. We spend, what? Thousands of dollars on hair products, and we can't get our hair to grow, but we can get a chin hair to grow in like eight hours, four inches. I mean, it's the craziest thing ever. How does that even happen?

Rusty Humphries: You should study that and find out why it does that and put it on the top of my head.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I know. I'm going to patent that one chin hair and figure out what ... It's like chin hair on steroids. Okay, anyway.

**Hair loss is a big problem with low thyroid.**

— *Dr. Nisha Jackson, PhD*

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Hair loss is a big problem with low thyroid. Cold hands, cold feet, dryness of the skin, cracking heels, cracking elbows, body pain, even pain on the bottom of your feet when you get out of bed in the morning, cold intolerance or even heat intolerance, excessive sweating, cold hands, cold feet, racing heart or irregular heart rate. For women, often, they have problems with their periods, heavy periods, heavy bleeding, irregular bleeding, puffy eyes.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I didn't say this on the last show. But puffy eyes, so that's — when I look at people's faces when they come into the office, I often notice they have puffiness right here under their eyes, and that can be a real obvious sign of low thyroid.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Water retention, bloating, constipation, depression, irritability, mood swings, these are all related to your thyroid not functioning optimally. Often, I think when you go into the medical office, it gets met with, "Oh you're just under a lot of stress, so just try to like get your stress under control and give me a call later."

Rusty Humphries: And is there a pill that goes along with that usually?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Well, no, not typically stress, but I think that one of the things that we're not doing very well today in the medical office is really understanding how stress can completely ransack your endocrine system.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: And thyroid is what we're focusing on today because stress, and I want to emphasize, stress is not just running around like you got your head cut off or too many things on your to-do list that you can't possibly get to. Trust me, I get that. Or having a stressful environment. It might not be any of those things because I see women in their sixties in my office that are retired and actually have a great life, but they're not sleeping at night. They're completely hormonally imbalanced, and their diet stinks. That is a form of stress. There's a lot of different forms of stress that people experience that can affect the thyroid.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I thought it would be kind of cool, today, to talk about how stress affects the thyroid. Like, what is the connection between stress and making your thyroid go low and causing all these symptoms that I showed last time on this diagram, that these are the symptoms of low thyroid. It affects your entire body. This is for men and women.

Rusty Humphries: Loss of eyebrow hair. I never even —

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Oh my gosh. That's a really obvious one. I developed low thyroid after my second child 25 years ago, and I've had this ever since. I cannot grow hair on this end of my eyebrow right here.

Rusty Humphries: It just looks like it's perfectly coiffed.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Well, I have eyebrow pencil there, okay? I correct it. Or I hide it.

Rusty Humphries: Behind her hair, okay.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: If you've lost the hair on the outer one third of your eyebrows, that is very likely low thyroid, unless you've shaved it off or something, but I don't know why you would do that.

Rusty Humphries: Whoopi Goldberg does. And like you said, I don't know why anybody would do that.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Low thyroid is a real problem for people, and I think that you've got to be able to make the connection. I want people to make the connection between high-stress lifestyle, or poor lifestyle habits, and making your thyroid go low because when your thyroid's low, who wants to feel like that? Who wants to gain weight, have their hair fall out, and get depressed?

Rusty Humphries: Is it an easy fix, or does this take a long time to fix low thyroid?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I think it's very easy to fix, but it's much more advantageous for somebody to fix their thyroid and fix the other things that are surrounding it that are not right, including lifestyle changes, optimizing vitamin levels and fixing other hormones that are not optimal. So, let's talk about what is the connection between low thyroid and stress.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: First of all, stress unfortunately depresses the signals from the brain to the thyroid. So just remember, everything starts in the hypothalamus. The signaling hormones start in the hypothalamus. They send signaling hormones – releasing hormones – down to the pituitary in the middle part of the brain, and then that pituitary gland sends signals out to the thyroid in the neck for the thyroid to make hormones. It also sends signals out to the adrenal glands, which are your stress glands that sit on top of your kidneys that help manufacture stress hormones to basically keep you alive, and it also sends signaling hormones from the pituitary down to the gonads for men – the testes – to make testicular hormones – sex hormones – and also to the ovaries. Isn't that cool?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I mean, that's cool. Once the endocrine system gets the signals, those glands get the signals from the brain, then it starts making hormones, and they circulate out into your body. This is a very simplified fashion, explanation. And then those signaling hormones go back to the brain, just like a thermostat, and it gives it messages back to the brain to make more or less, depending on how much is being produced.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: So now that we've got that little simplified picture, I want to say that with stress, stress actually changes the signals that are coming from the brain. That ain't good, Rusty, because when it suppresses the signals coming from the brain, that means less signals are going from your brain, the pituitary, to the thyroid. And then the thyroid is like, "Hey, cool. I don't have to make as much thyroid hormone because I ain't getting the signal." If you don't get the signal then you don't make enough thyroid hormone, and then you end up with these problems.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: It's much more dramatic than that. It's much more complicated than that, but that's exactly what's happening; it's messing up the hypothalamic pituitary access to the endocrine system. So it's changing the signals. It's suppressing them.

Rusty Humphries: Okay, and obviously, that is wide-ranging in the body. It's not like just one little thing. This is almost everything, right?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Yeah, and this is not a theory, Rusty. There have been countless studies that have shown that high stress or poor lifestyle, which is also stressful for the body, changes the signals from the brain to the endocrine system, particularly the thyroid. So, that's why we have people walking around with low thyroid that are perfectly healthy people because they're too stressed out.

Rusty Humphries: Now what if ... Zero plus zero equals zero. So, what if I have a bad diet and high stress? Does that cancel each other out and make it better?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: No, that does not neutralize.

Rusty Humphries: That does not help.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: That's not neutral. That's negative, negative.

Rusty Humphries: Okay, just making sure. All right. I'm guessing a lot of people have that issue.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Yes, absolutely. It's becoming an absolute worldwide epidemic. Just look around at people. It's becoming more and more of a problem.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: The next one, which I think is profound – and I'm probably going to step on some people's toes saying this, but I'm going to say it anyway – is adrenal stress. Remember the signals go from the brain to the stress glands also, and they go from the brain to the thyroid, and they go from the brain to the ovaries or the testes. The signals are going out to those three glands, which means if the signals are not normal in the brain, it can affect all three glands: the stress glands, the thyroid gland, and the sex hormone glands. So that means that you can have the symptoms that affect your whole body.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: The thing that's happening here that I'm most concerned about with stress is that your body, your thyroid, makes T4. That's a storage thyroid hormone. Not a big deal. Not really that important, except for the T4 uses your body to convert into the active thyroid hormone called T3. T3 is really the thyroid hormone that's most important because it's the active thyroid that's really affecting at the cellular level.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Unfortunately, the conversion from T4 to T3, the active thyroid, there's certain things that must happen for that conversion to take place. Stress interferes with the conversion of T4 to T3. Again, not a theory. Countless studies have shown that there is an interruption between T4 converting to T3, which is your active thyroid that you need to feel well. Stress interferes with that conversion. Not with everybody but with many people. And it happens especially if stress is prolonged.

Rusty Humphries: Is that one of those things that some doctors just aren't going to agree with you or they don't want to hear that kind of thing? How dare you suggest that hormones are going to be affected by stress?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Right. Well, when I first started practicing medicine in 1990, we checked all the thyroid levels, and somewhere along the line – I don't know when this actually started happening because I've been practicing for a long time – they stopped teaching in med school that medical providers and practitioners should ... they don't need to test the whole thing. They just need to look at the TSH because everything should be based on the TSH, which is just the signal from the brain. It's not what's circulating in your body. It's not the end result, right?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: It would just be like looking at a thermostat. Again, I don't want to step on any toes, but I'm going to say it. It would be like looking at the thermostat on the wall and saying, "Oh it's 75 degrees in here," but it isn't 75 degrees in here. It's 68 degrees in here, or it's 102 degrees in here, and you're like, "Wait, that doesn't make any sense. It's a 100. It feels like 102, but my thermostat says 75. Something's haywire."

Dr. Nisha Jackson: What is standard of care today, what we see most prevalent in the medical offices today if somebody comes into the medical office, and they say, "Hey, I researched low thyroid, and I have 10 of the 12 symptoms of low thyroid," – now, there's way more than 12, but if they come into the medical office, and they say, "I have all these symptoms of low thyroid" – they're going to most likely get just a TSH test. And that is, in my opinion, my humble opinion, not enough.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: They need to look at the whole picture so that we know what we're dealing with. The thermostat example is a good example because sometimes, how hot it is in the room is not necessarily what the thermostat is saying. Something went haywire, which means we must look at what's happening downstream. What is circulating in the body. And this little example I gave of the thyroid with stress does not convert from T4 to T3. Well, unless you're testing T3, Rusty, you're not going to pick it up. So how are we going to know what's wrong with the patient if we don't actually order the test and see what's going on downstream?

Rusty Humphries: I guess I don't even understand why you would not want to test more things.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I don't know why we are training medical providers today to not test the whole picture because I believe we would be identifying problems and getting people healthier. Low thyroid causes high cholesterol. Why in the world would we put people on high cholesterol meds instead of just treating their thyroid? Why? Tell me why. There's no excuse for that. There's no excuse that we would put people on a statin drug that has very significant side effects when you can just treat the low thyroid, if that's the problem. But that's my whole point –

Rusty Humphries: Is that a Big Pharma thing? There's more money in statin drugs than there are in thyroid drugs, or is it just easier? What do you think? What's your hypothesis? You don't have to say it's fact.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I don't have a comment on Big Pharma. I'm just saying, we're here ... I was put on this earth to help patients. I wasn't put on this earth to figure out what insurances cover and what standard ... What, all of a sudden somebody changed the rule that we should never check circulating thyroid hormones? If somebody has symptoms of low thyroid, we're not doing them a service by not checking the whole picture because we're going to send them on their merry way if the TSH is normal. It could be normal because the range for a TSH is so broad that if you're sitting all the way down at the upper end or the lower end, you're going to be told, most likely, you're fine. But then you're going to walk away with all these symptoms of low thyroid that are on that graph I just showed you, and it's not fair to the patient. They shouldn't have to live like that.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I'm really going crazy right now talking about this, but I'm very —

Rusty Humphries: No, you're doing great. I mean this is important stuff, and we want to hear the truth. I think that's what most people who are honest with themselves say, "Just tell us the truth. We don't want to hear a bunch of baloney —

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I want to know the truth.

Rusty Humphries: ... We don't want to hear stuff that's going to help sell products for the pharmaceutical companies or wherever." I'm not saying that they're all bad. I don't know. I'm just saying we just want to hear the truth, and that's why we listen to your show, Dr. Nisha Jackson, because you tell us this, even though you kind of maybe put you and your career in jeopardy sometimes.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I don't put my career in jeopardy because I think there's so much research out there, Rusty, to show that these are important tests. This is something we have to take very seriously. Our environment is affecting the thyroid, and our stress is affecting the thyroid. All I'm saying is I would much rather do a service for my patients and all of the practitioners that work for me, I'd much rather them do a service for their patients and find out what is going on underneath, rather than just sugarcoating it with a bunch of drugs. I think that's a better way to treat our patients.

Rusty Humphries: I agree. Let me ask you one other thing because I think this environmental thing is a big deal. We don't have enough time to get into how the environment affects hormones in this show, but maybe the next show we do, am I right? I think from everything that I've read, your hormones are really affected by what's going on in the environment today.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Yes, absolutely. We're going to do a show on plastics, drinking from plastic bottles and heating up things in a microwave in plastics and all of the exposure, getting into a car that's hot and all of the plastics that ... Our cars are plastic. All the heat that's heating up the plastic is emitting fumes that you're inhaling because you absorb really well through your lungs, right? All of these things cause your hormones to be disrupted. So we're going to do a whole show on that because that's fascinating how it completely disrupts your endocrine system.

Rusty Humphries: So, the big red cup that you have at parties, does that just get your hormones all juiced up?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: The red SOLO cup probably causes damage, yes. There's a number of ways that your stress is affecting your thyroid. It can even affect your gut. The substances that are coming from the environment going through your gut can weaken your immune system, which then can cause thyroid disruption. So there's all sorts of issues that can happen with stress.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Stress can even cause something that is more of a newer syndrome called thyroid resistance. So now, your body is resistant to even the thyroid hormones that it's making. It's not being active at the cellular site. There's so many things that can happen, but the most important, take-home message on this show today is that if you're under a lot of stress, and I again, I don't care if it's emotional stress by dealing with negative people in your life, not sleeping well at night ... It could be stress from your diet where your diet's just really toxic and you have too much sugar and flour on your diet and your blood sugar is going up and down. It could be that your to-do list is just too long and you can't get through it and you're putting so much pressure on yourself. Maybe it's just that you just have too much on your plate.

**Nobody can get away with long-term stress and not have an endocrine issue.**

*— Dr. Nisha Jackson, PhD*

Dr. Nisha Jackson: You're going to have an endocrine problem at some point. You are going to either have low thyroid, a gynecological issue with your female hormones, or your male hormones, your testosterone is going to ... Something is going to happen at some point. Nobody can get away with long-term stress and not have an endocrine issue.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: The take-home message, Rusty, on this is we've got to take this stuff seriously, even if you just make one tiny change a week. Like, I'm going to really focus on getting sugar and flour out of my diet and use it more as a treat, rather than a staple, right?

Rusty Humphries: You keep harping on sugar. Sugar, sugar, sugar. It's like every couple of episodes, we got to talk about sugar. Come on. Is sugar really that bad?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I'm never going to stop talking about sugar because it is absolutely the devil. It's the big lie. It's a big lie for people. And I love sugar. I'm a major sugaraholic. I come from four generations of sugaraholics. I do. I love sugar. Ask any one of my friends. I love chocolate, I love dessert, I love sugar. But I can only have a little bit of it. Not only do I feel terrible after eating it, but I can only have a little bit. And it has to be used literally as a once-or-twice-a-week treat. It cannot be used as a daily staple. People are OD'ing on bread – which is just like eating sugar – and flour, chips, all sorts of ... pancakes and Eggos.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: They're OD'ing on this stuff, and they're giving their kids it too: sugary drinks, juices, all those things. This is a problem for your entire endocrine system. If you want to be on the fast track to ransacking your endocrine system – and that's including your stress glands, your thyroid glands, and your sex hormones, your female and male hormones – just keep eating a lot of sugar and flour because you will be on the fast track to do it. It's not good.

Rusty Humphries: Now, you said that you get sick after eating chocolate. Are you overly sensitive?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: No, no. No, I did not say that. I did not. Strike that –

Rusty Humphries: Okay. You don't feel as good?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Strike the record. I never said chocolate. I actually believe in chocolate. I have one ounce of dark chocolate in the afternoon, every single afternoon. I actually think dark chocolate's good for you. I'm talking about sugary things. Sugar or flour.

Rusty Humphries: How about two great tastes that taste great together: the chocolate and peanut butter? Now that's probably okay because peanuts are from the ground.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I don't have a problem with natural peanut butter. I don't. Again, I don't –

Rusty Humphries: But Reese's is probably not on your list.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Probably not Reese's, although they are very good, but no. This would be something you should take a bite of and then throw the rest of it away and stomp it in your garbage.

Rusty Humphries: There you go. And you know what? I'll bet you the Reese's people would agree. Buy one, stomp it out, buy a whole bunch more. That's a great selling point. Stomp out the Reese's. We'll make more.

Dr. Nisha Jackson: That's right.

Rusty Humphries: All right. Well, we're running short of time here. Do you have anything to wrap it up with here, Nisha?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: I guess the other thing I want to say about thyroid is really consider talking to your medical provider, whoever you see, about the possibility of looking at all the levels and then asking for the test results and then questioning if your levels are all the way at the bottom with your circulating thyroid. Not the TSH, because the TSH would actually be at the high end if it's low because that means the signal is like, "Hey lady," or, "Man, make some more thyroid hormone." So that signal would be high, but the thyroid hormones that are in your body would be low.

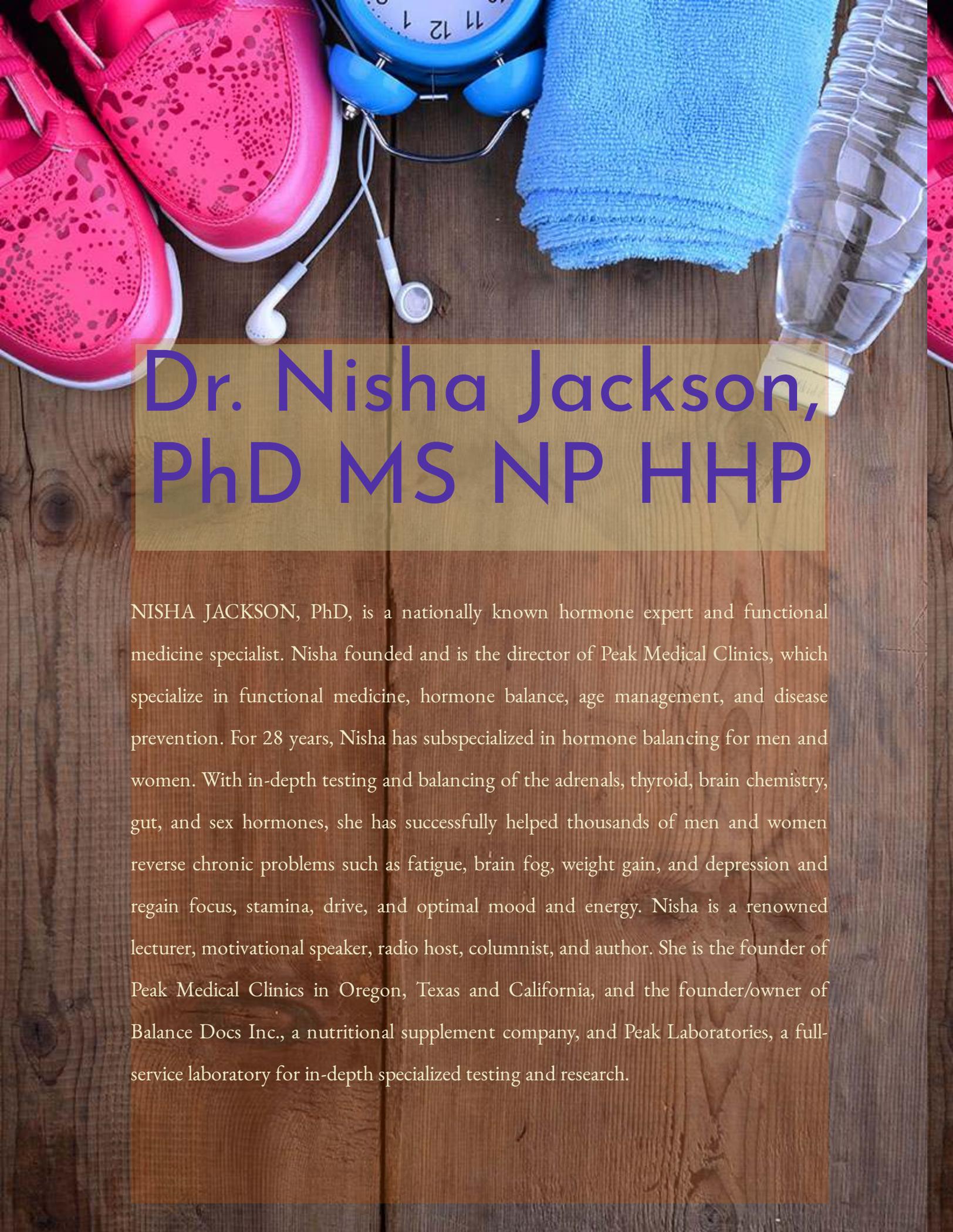
Dr. Nisha Jackson: We'll have transcripts of this show. It's really important that people know. You can also go to page 109 in [my book](#). It's a whole chapter on thyroid. It's really important that people understand more, get a little bit more in depth about thyroid, like really what does it do. I have great graphs in here, and it will tell you what tests to request. I guess that's a thing: Be autonomous about your health and ask for what you want and step in and be partners with your medical provider instead of just accepting that everything's fine.

Rusty Humphries: All right. The name of the book, by the way, and I suggest you get it, is called *Brilliant Burnout*, how successful, driven women can stay in the game by rewiring their bodies, brains, and hormones. And this is okay for men too, right?

Dr. Nisha Jackson: Yes, absolutely. Actually, most of the chapters in the book are relevant to men and women. But it is kind of a chick book, but you know, I mean I wrote it that way, but men can learn a lot about the endocrine system by just reading certain chapters.

Rusty Humphries: All right. Please do us a favor, would you, and that is subscribe to *The Dr. Nisha Jackson Show*, whether it's here on Apple podcast or on Google podcast, or send us an [email](#) or [on YouTube](#), subscribe to the channel. A show comes out every week, and it's important, the latest information, new health hacks that Dr. Nisha Jackson's finding and sharing with you every week.

Rusty Humphries: Next week, we're going to talk about how the environment is affecting your hormones, and that's very important, too. So we'll catch you next time. Thank you so much for being here. [NishaJackson.com](#) is where you can find her, and we'll see you next time right here on *The Dr. Nisha Jackson Show*.



# Dr. Nisha Jackson, PhD MS NP HHP

NISHA JACKSON, PhD, is a nationally known hormone expert and functional medicine specialist. Nisha founded and is the director of Peak Medical Clinics, which specialize in functional medicine, hormone balance, age management, and disease prevention. For 28 years, Nisha has subspecialized in hormone balancing for men and women. With in-depth testing and balancing of the adrenals, thyroid, brain chemistry, gut, and sex hormones, she has successfully helped thousands of men and women reverse chronic problems such as fatigue, brain fog, weight gain, and depression and regain focus, stamina, drive, and optimal mood and energy. Nisha is a renowned lecturer, motivational speaker, radio host, columnist, and author. She is the founder of Peak Medical Clinics in Oregon, Texas and California, and the founder/owner of Balance Docs Inc., a nutritional supplement company, and Peak Laboratories, a full-service laboratory for in-depth specialized testing and research.