

## Ep 68: Testing, testing! A deep dive into the tests functional nutritionists use

AMANDA: Can I ask you, so I, I guess explain maybe to everybody a little bit in terms of like our testing, right? How comprehensive it is, how unique it is and how it's really intended to get to the root cause to figuring out what these imbalances are, what the, where the inflammation is in the body and that how that's unique.

In regards to conventional healthcare versus what we do.

MERYL: Yes, absolutely. Did I answer the first question? Well enough, like the, about the 90 minute detail? Yeah. Like what to expect. Okay. I think so. I'm just trying to think if I, if, if you come up with one, like a client, like scenario that I missed, please tell me, because I think it's important that we address all of that.

Like, I really want people to know what to expect when they come in. You know. And so and, and it's not about scaring people away. I think that's the other thing is that we really, it is a nonjudgmental. Conversation. We're not gonna be like, oh my God, you ate that Oreo. You know, it's okay.

Were you hungry when you ate that Oreo? Like, do you even know what that means? Right. So **it's not about judging. It's really about compassion. It's about listening and it is about finding a solution to a problem.** that has plagued you for who knows how long, right? Right. The pain point. What is your pain point?

Are you ready? Here's my biggest question. **Are you ready to get rid of the pain?** is it serving you in some way? Probably not. Right. Yeah. So to go back to the testing. So right in that 90 minutes, what we go through is of course the, the, the history, your health history. And then what I'm trying to go through as, and I'm organizing it in my head of, okay, what should come next? There's there's many kinds of testing. **I always believe you do the right test for the right reason at the right time**, because you certainly cannot. What I would call mitigate. Right? You cannot address every imbalance, especially if someone comes in with years and years of, of imbalance, then you're gonna expect to fix everything in, in a one session and two session and four sessions.

**So you have to organize it in terms of priorities.** Right? So we **take a really deep dive metabolically**. When I say metabolically, what does that mean? I mean, comprehensive. Lipid panels. What does that mean? **It's beyond just cholesterol, triglycerides and LDL.** We really look at the fats in the body right in the, and, and how do they impact inflammation and cardiovascular disease and brain health and gut health and hormone health.

Right. So we look at all of those tests, thyroid, all of those glands that affect adrenal health, all of these things that your typical doctor is just not looking at. And so, and we also look at the ranges that are really applicable. To your own system, meaning functional the ranges in, in traditional medicine, you've got that bell curve, right.

And they've made the ranges. If you look at normal, they've made it so broad because the insurance company can then say, oh no, you're in normal range. We're not paying for that. Right. When really like thyroid numbers. And I mean, we did a podcast. Thyroid numbers are so tightly controlled, 1.0 to two point 5.

That should be your TSH. If you're below that or you're above that you are not normal. Hmm. You know, and the same thing, most, most physicians are not testing the antibodies cuz they say, ah, we can't do anything about that. wrong. We totally can. so I think understanding why we're doing those metabolic tests, how important they are to telling us what is under the hood is vital.

Right? So that's one group of tests. Then we do the Neutra Val, as we call it or **nutrient test organic acid**. Because now my work has been in nutritional biochemistry for over 20 years. What does that mean? **I am looking at your operating system**. Your operating system is more than just your labs, right?

Your labs that I'm talking about. Tell us how your, how your organs are functioning. It does not tell us cellularly, where are your we talked about that gas tank. Where's your gas tank. . So we look at vitamins and we look at minerals and we look at antioxidants and amino acids and fatty acids and heavy metals.

Right? If you are full of heavy metals lead and mercury and arsenic and all those heavy metals that affect our metabolism. You're not gonna be well mm-hmm so we look at those kinds of things. We can do stool testing, which gives us gut the microbiome. Right. Everybody knows what the microbiome now is. We look at microbiome.

and we look at all of these. We can look at the hormone tests again. We do the right tests for the right reasons, depending upon who's sitting in front of me, but we now have. And, and so oftentimes what I hear is, well, **why doesn't my doctor do these tests? Well, I always say your doctor was trained with one toolbox**.

Here's your doctor's toolbox right. And **most often now, unfortunately it's the pharmaceutical toolbox, right?** It's the polypharmacy that you have now, medications. Well, It's not that they're they're trained, this is the only toolbox. **Well, we now know that there's a whole bunch of other toolboxes** in the shed that really can measure where those disconnects are and of what great utility.

Wow. It's amazing to be able to see that and be able to help someone and say, well, look, it was a real, it was a nutritional deficiency that led you to X, Y, and Z, right. Or it was a hormone imbalance that led you to X, Y, and Z. Expression of a symptom. And I think the most important one. So I'm savings sort of the best for last, in this case, but really **what has made a huge shift in my practice is the genomic or the DNA testing**.

And you know, you and I just talked about this, cuz it is a confusing topic, right? So Amanda works here every single day. She hears us, she sees the testing and she came over to me and she's like, can you explain that again? To me? bring it out for me again in simple.

Yeah, because it is it's right. There's genetics and, and there's, there's DNA missteps that happen that are a function of, let's say things like cystic fibrosis, like the, the diseases that actually have DNA implications when there's either two, an extra copy of a chromosome or, or a deletion of a chromosome, right.

That's a very different like cystic fibrosis and, and trisomy 23, where mental retardation, things like that are. Or, or down syndrome, sorry. Down syndrome is a very different genetic component than the work that we do with DNA. **Nutritional genomics is really about what does our DNA tell us about our health and wellbeing?**

So the most important thing to hear on this very important, the testing we do is not predicted. **It does not predict a disease is going to happen. And it does not diagnose you with a disease. All it tells us is what is the predisposition genetically for you to express or, or have this particular trait played out.**

Right? So for example, we talked about cardiovascular disease and you said, well, If my dad has cardiovascular disease and my mom doesn't, but my dad's family really has bad cardiovascular disease. Will this tell me if I am going to have cardiovascular disease? and so the answer is it's not going to say definitively you have cardiovascular disease, but we are gonna look at the genes at the DNA and say, wow, we see that there's a pretty, a pretty consistent genetic pattern that may predispose you to some of the things that your dad. Wow. Knowing this information, we could totally help you not have that happen to you. Isn't that amazing? Yeah. Right. And so people say, well, I don't know. I don't wanna know if I'm gonna have Alzheimer's. Well, here's the beauty of that. First of all, we can never predict if you're gonna get Alzheimer's.

Right. But wouldn't it be nice to know if, if in 30 years from now I may express that genetic tendency. **And if that is maybe in my future, There's all these things that we can do to help you prevent that.** So why are you digging your head in the sand right now? When a that's not happening now, and we're not guaranteeing that that's gonna happen, but we could surely give you a, a leg up on the fact that it might not ever happen.

and that happens in my family. I mean, I, I share this all the time, cardiovascular diseases rampant into my dad's side of the family, memory cognition. I'm dealing with it now with my dad dementia. And I'm looking at my genetics and, and my brothers. Right. And I'm like, wow, we kind of have those same genetics.

So if I know. , I am going to take care of my brain now. and how it, like, to me, that's a gift because I can measure my levels of antioxidants. You know, Alzheimer's, doesn't just happen out of the blue it's progressive because we know it's from the buildup of plaque in the brain, what causes the buildup of plaque?

Too much sugar too much saturated, fat, too many processed foods. Like this is the very reason we do this stuff now, you know? And so like, I get so excited and I get so passionate because I'm like, ah, we can, we can help you. Yeah. You know? Yeah. So does that explain so that, like I said, so to me, I, I really, my preference and the way we start to move forward with our new packages and stuff is really going to be, you gotta do this test.

If I'm gonna be able to give you the best that I've got.

Right because **the best that I've got is your individual blueprint. Your DNA really helps me help you.** . And without that, I'm not that I'm guessing, but sometimes I am because I don't know exactly what we need to be looking at. Yeah. I mean, I'm usually a pretty good guesser, but, you know?

Yeah. So did that answer that question?

AMANDA: Yeah, I'd say so.

So I'd say so ideally what you'd like to see moving forward is that that's kind of like the basic that's like the starting point.

MERYL: Absolutely. Okay. And, and I am almost at some point probably going to insist on that. Like, if you wanna see me yeah.

Not that. But if you really wanna come see me and, and you wanna get the best of what I have to offer you, do your DNA. Yeah, because that is I always say like, we've got the computers in front of us. We have the phones, like what is your operating system that is your operating system and your operating system requires input.

What is the input that you need to have your body be as healthy and balanced as possible? like, that's what we need to know. Yeah. And, and the beauty of knowing your DNA is again, people come in all the time and they're so confused about. The messaging they get, I should be on this diet. I should be on paleo. I should be on keto. I should be on intermittent fasting again. I had someone come in and they literally, if I could tell you were in tears because they're like, well, I signed up for this program I've been doing intermittent fasting for X number of time and I'm doing okay with it. I don't feel great, but I'm doing okay with it.

And then I signed up for an exercise program and they told me not to do intermittent fasting that I need to do paleo. And they were hysterical growing. Like, I don't even know what to do nor do I know how to do it. So my comment back to this person was like, well, maybe neither one of those is right for you.

right. And until we know what goes on underneath and what is specific to you, because now we can do that. Then isn't that where it all comes into play. And I, I give my own story. As an example, I always say the first 25 years of my life, **I worked on the outside to make the inside feel better.**

Right. I struggled to, I wanted to be thinner. I wanted to be prettier. I wanted to be whatever was smarter and all those things. That was my messaging. But my, the biggest, the most control I had over that was my body. And I struggled to try and be. To try and be what the models look like on the magazine.

Well, I was never gonna be five eight, and I was never gonna be like that because as I learned, my genetics is not that right. So the last 25 years have been me understanding, wow, this is my DNA. And people say to me all the time, well I whether they look at me that I I'm thin, I'm not thin, I'm too muscular.

I'm not, I'm tired of hearing everybody's noise. I don't really give a shit anymore. not what anybody says, you know? Because I am never. And nor do I wanna be? What society says we should look like. I think there's a lot of that and I can get off on that tangent. And I won't go into that cuz we know culturally it's a mess yeah.

Out there. But the bottom line is, is that if I personally ate the way people told me, I should eat, thinking what they know is correct. If I exercise the way I was told to exercise. I'd be heavy I would really be until I learned how, because my genetics, I have, I always call it the Ashkenazi fat gene.

There's really no such thing as the Ashkenazi fat gene, I'm telling you that's my own, that's my own thing on it, but you can see these patterns. And so I'm like, wow. You know, I know that I

have that. And I don't burn fat so well, and I store sugar too readily, and I do all of these things. So I have to pay attention to these things.

and I can't eat as much as maybe you can. Right. so, and I feel good though, knowing this and **I feel good and empowered that I can take this information and, and use it for myself.** And so that is the beauty of knowing the genomics. .

AMANDA: And so that's what you'd say. Somebody who decides to come work with us, walks away with, they know what's custom. We customize. A plan of action for them, for testing, for supplementation, for a diet, for lifestyle, all of that, based on all of what we just discussed.

Exactly. Right. So each, I always say your own, you're your, your own N of one, right? N of one. Meaning you're your own experiment, right? so, and you knew that, right?

You had a like, well, we're doing your DNA, but, but, so it'll be very interesting to see, but again, the more you intuitively listen to yourself, The better, you were able to feel with the guidance of, of the functional support, right? Yeah. Yeah, definitely. So yeah they walk out everything is, is designed individually.

You know, we, **we may start with a generalized plan just as a jumping off point, but ultimately. It becomes your plan.** And so what I really want people to hear is that part of the process is that **it's not always a straight line to health**, right? It's not always, I'm gonna go from point a to Z and have no missteps, like your body is a dynamic being.

And so we can say, oh yeah, we're gonna do this, this and this. And you should be here. And sometimes you do this, this and this, and you take a step back and that's. Right. And that's expected, but if you're having, I always say you as a client, have to communicate with us as the coach. If you are not communicating with how you are feeling.

Then how do we coach you? if you are not telling us if, if a supplement is making you feel bad or that you're struggling to get to sleep, or what you may think is a silly little thing. It's not so silly. We need to know that, that communication. That's why I say **this is a participatory thing.**

I think. A lot of people, if you're, again, in that medical model are not expected for that part the, the expectation you go see the doctor and then you don't hear from them forever. Right? Mm-hmm , that's where the beauty of the work that we do. and we can get into this, right? What are the next steps in terms of the coaching and the accountability part of that, but having someone hold your hand and creating the community, this is the other thing that we're gonna start to do is create that sense of community for people like we're gonna have memberships so that people feel so connected to us.

On a consistent basis because here's the thing. **Who are you trusting to give you information?** Mm-hmm I think this is so important. Mm-hmm , **there's so much noise.** And I talked about today in one of the videos that I did about authenticity. I think it is so important because I think there are so many people out there who are inauthentic, especially with the advent or not the advent. Right. But with the extreme use of social media, people are getting my, my kids' ages, right. Are, are getting, and actually I saw a report that on TikTok, more people, the gen, gen, what is the gen? No. Where gen X, gen X. Is those gen Xers are looking to TikTok more than they are to Google for searching for information.

Wow. It doesn't matter whether it's Google, whether it's TikTok, whether it's Instagram, whether it's Facebook, who are you getting your information from? Yeah, look, there's a lot of great

sources out there and there's a lot of reputable people. Mm-hmm but the fact is, is that there's also a lot. In authenticity.

Yeah. And people are trying to sell you things and inaccuracy. Well, that too.

Yeah. Right. So look, we all wanna make money. We all right. But the fact is we, we are emotional beings and **we succumb to that quick promise that instant gratification** how many times a day do we get someone calling us?

Oh, I saw this advertisement about this weight loss pill. And is it gonna work? And I'm. If I had that, if all of those things worked, I'd have some island, we'd be having this conversation on an island in Fiji, because that's what I'd have, if it really works. Right. Right. Yeah. **You gotta put in the work. There is no, there is no easy way or quick way from point A to point Z.** There just isn't. Yeah. Right. Your body is, is like I said, a dynamic being.

**Make sure that whoever you're getting your information from does the research.** Yes.

Everybody who knows me. And I think this is part of our success. Everybody knows me, knows that I put in the research, whether it comes to a protocol. right. I will not put out a protocol until I know that it's been well researched, whether it comes to supplementation and this is a big one. Mm-hmm right. Everybody out there is getting supplements from who knows where mm-hmm are you checking the quality? Are you checking the purity? Are you checking? All of the things that I check probably not mm-hmm right.

And this is why I say **I recommend supplements that I know work that are of the purest quality of the, the best ingredients and that they're efficacious that they do what they're gonna, what they say they're gonna do.** Mm-hmm so the long winded answer to yes, **everybody gets a customized program based on all of that.**

Great. But, but more importantly, that we are really authentic in the work that we do. Yep. And I stand. And I've seen it. I can attest to it. Thank you. What else, what other questions do we have? You know, let me that, that I might not have covered in the roundabout conversation that we well, no, no. I think I, I feel doing pretty good.

We, yeah,

AMANDA: I feel like we've covered kind of everything that I had noted. Was there anything. Additionally, you wanted to add that we might have left out?

MERYL: No, I think it was just real. Look, I'd love to hear from everybody else. You know, what questions do you guys have? Cuz we try and come up with them and and, and anticipate right. The questions that we are going to get. I mean, I really want, I want people in here who who, who understand that this is the process and. Once they start feeling well. I think the other thing is that and you don't have to feel bad to come in here. Right? You could be saying, wow. You know, I feel pretty good.

How do I continue? That wellness journey. I think that's a big message that I wanna tell people is that **you don't have to be sick to come in here. that you really wanna just amplify. Your health** mm-hmm and how do you do that? And, and again this is the work that we do is helping people really elevate.

That conversation about themselves. That it's more than just the food that you put in your mouth. It's the environment. It is the energy. It is the people you surround yourself with. Like,

these are all the things and why it's so important to create the community that I'm talking about. Yeah. Because we talk about all these things.

Yeah. And we certainly can't always address all of these things in even in a 12 week. Session, right. There's so much information that we have to share with people. Yeah. That I am so excited to be looking forward to doing this membership type of model because it just, we want, I want everybody to have access to it and I want them to understand like, yeah, this is the real deal.

This is the right information. And here's why it's the right answer. Don't just trust me because I say so. Yeah. I think that's the biggest, you know? Yeah. And so. When people come in and say, wow, I've done my homework. I know what you're about. I know what to expect. And I am ready. Mm-hmm that is what we want in here.

Definitely. Right. And because I know we can help you. Yeah. is your window open? Yeah. Right. And listen, I meet a lot of people all day long. They're like, well, I'm not ready to give this up and I'm not ready to give that up. And I say, why, what is, what is not, I think here's the other thing that I really, really wanna.

That **anything we do is not about deprivation and it's not about starvation**, right? It's not about giving up the very things that you love. I eat pizza, I eat ice cream. I eat cookies once in a while. It's in moderation. Right? My idea of moderation might be different than your idea of moderation. You do all this amazing baking.

Right.

AMANDA: Yeah. I don't, I couldn't bake every single day and eat it every day. Right. Yeah.

MERYL: But right. But you're eating, but like you're not depriving yourself. No. Right. I think people think, oh, I'm gonna go on a plan. I'm not gonna do all these things. Right, right. That's I think one of the biggest misconceptions definitely.

Yep. Like, oh, you're gonna put me on a plan and I am never gonna be able to have the things that I like. I'm like what, okay. First of all, let's talk about what the things, **what are the things that you like and let's just make 'em healthy or make sure. They're a good fit for you**, right? And are they serving you?

Right? I had a woman come in. She's she's from the islands. She was here a couple of days ago and She's like, oh, but, but I am a little scared that you're gonna take away my island food. And I said, oddly enough, I really want you to eat more of your island food. Right. Because I will tell you one of the things, if you eat foods, there's a great book.

Daphne Miller wrote it's called the jungle effect. So shout out to Daphne Miller. I read this book many years ago and I still love this book because she talks about. How, **when we take people out of their cultural ancestral sort of environment of food, how they get sick**. And so because now they're eating foods that are not, that are not really talking to their genetics.

And so I said to those women, no, **eat the island food, but how do we make the island food a little healthier?** Right, right. What are the healthy fats, as opposed to the process fat, how do you get more of the veggies that you love so much into your diet? And she's like, oh, wow.

Right. So it's always about the turn and the pivot.

Mm-hmm how do we look at that and say, okay, well, rather than looking at it, like, I'm gonna be deprived. **How do I nourish? How do I nourish my mind? My body, my soul** mm-hmm so,

no, I think that's my takeaway. I love it. Anything else that we missed? I don't think so. anything we didn't cover. I'm sure we will get to it.

Like I said, send us your questions. Send us your comments. If you like watching us do this back and forth. Tell us that too. And what you wanna see more of. Don't forget. We have our **amazing online store with all of our, we've got amazing private label products that I've spent. Time and energy and effort.**

**And it's been a real effort of love to create these things** because I've tried to take the best of the best. So we've got some awesome private label supplements on the store, [merylbrandwein.com](http://merylbrandwein.com) we are doing there's a subscribe and save option, but plenty of stuff on there that I really want you guys to check out because it's going to make your life easy. And if you have any questions, reach out to us, but really proud of the. Of the roster we created and more private label coming. So make sure to check that out. I think our favorite this week is the electrolyte and the vitamin C. Yes. Those are like flying out it's hot here in Florida, so hot it's hot everywhere else.

You think you can just replace water with just the, no, you are losing minerals and very, very important vitamin not the vitamin so much, but the minerals. So that's what electrolytes are minerals. So we've got this amazing electrolyte E light E light. complete on the, on the store with the vitamin C, put them in your water game changer for your workouts.

If you're doing stuff outside and you're just not replenishing your electrolytes, it's a great way to do it. So take a, take a look. Thank you, Amanda. Thank you as always. Yeah. And this is your Rebel Nutritionist signing off, make it a great day.