



EPISODE #165

## LITHIUM DEFICIENCY & MENTAL HEALTH WITH JAMES GREENBLATT

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#### Wendy Myers:

Hello, Wendy Myers here from [Liveto110.com](http://Liveto110.com). Thank you so much, for tuning into the Live to 110 Podcast, which is your source to learn how to live forever medication and disease-free.

Today, we are going to be talking about a little known mineral, one of my favorites, called lithium. Lithium orotate is a mineral that most people need. I do lots of testing and find that the vast majority, 95% of clients that I test have zero lithium.

And it is a very important modulator to correct or modulate our neurotransmitters in our brains and to create GABA to relax us and calm us and heal the brain and detox the brain. It's incredibly important and it is missing from our soils and our water. So I wanted to go in depth.

I found Dr. James Greenblatt at [JamesGreenblattMD.com](http://JamesGreenblattMD.com). He wrote a book on lithium. So I jumped at the chance to interview him on the podcast. And I thought it would be very, very interesting, including you guys into why you may want to try lithium supplementation.

Please keep in mind that the Live to 110 Podcast is solely informational in nature and is not intended to treat or diagnose or cure any disease or health condition. The Live to 110 Podcast is solely informational in nature and for entertainment purposes only. So please consult your

healthcare practitioner before engaging in anything we may suggest today on the show.

I am so thrilled to account the upcoming Medicinal Supplements Summit. This is a summit that I hosted with my friend, Ian Clark. He's a maker of Activation Products at [ActivationProducts.com](http://ActivationProducts.com). He makes Ocean's Alive Marine Phytoplankton, which I think many of you have probably heard of.

And you can visit the site at [MedicinalSupplementsSummit.com](http://MedicinalSupplementsSummit.com). Sorry, it's a mouthful. But I wanted to do this summit. I have been wanting to do this for many, many years. I have spoken on 35 summits and I just wanted to do my own.

I am very passionate about supplements and very passionate about customizing supplements to your body chemistry. So I brought together 36 of the world's leading experts in the health and nutrition to talk about supplements, which ones you should be taking, the top supplements in depth, should you be taking food-based or synthetics or both, the best supplements for various health conditions, the testing you should do to customize supplements to your body. We dig deep on so many different issues. We talk about probiotics, fish oil, bile supplements, digestive aids, supplements if you have thyroid issues or autoimmune or diabetes or hearth conditions.

It's such a depth of information. I am so excited to bring it to you. So go check it out at [MedicinalSupplementsSummit.com](http://MedicinalSupplementsSummit.com). You can sign up now. It goes live and airs totally free, September 12 through the 19<sup>th</sup>.

## 03:29 ABOUT DR. JAMES GREENBLATT

Wendy Myers:

Our guest today is Dr. James Greenblatt. He's a board certified Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist. He has over 20 years of experience treating complex mood and eating disorders, incorporating nutritional and lifestyle interventions to help patients achieve relief from their symptoms.

Dr. Greenblatt currently serves as the Chief Medical Officer at Walden Behavior Center and is also an Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Tufts University School of Medicine and Dartmouth College Geisel School of Medicine. His book, *The Breakthrough Depression Solution* is now available on Amazon.

Dr. Greenblatt, thank you so much for coming on the show.

James Greenblatt: My pleasure. Thank you for inviting me.

Wendy Myers: Why don't you tell the listeners a little bit about yourself and your background?

James Greenblatt: Sure. I am a traditionally trained psychiatrist, board certified Adult and Child Psychiatrist. I have been practicing for almost 30 years.

And after becoming a psychiatrist in practice, after a few minutes, I realized the model wasn't quite what I was looking for. Patients weren't getting better and I very quickly resorted to an integrative alternative nutritional model. And for 30 years, I have been practicing psychiatry as an integrative psychiatrist.

Wendy Myers: Fantastic! I love to hear that.

## 04:52 PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATIONS

Wendy Myers: Can you talk a little bit about psychiatric medications and maybe your take on those? Do you try to prescribe those minimally, maybe [...] supplements for amino acids?

James Greenblatt: Yeah. As a psychiatrist, I think our profession has gotten carried away with use of medications where we have this blind polypharmacy and trial and error guessing. And I am very much against that.

I haven't thrown away my prescription pad, so I believe there is a use for medications. But we look at nutritional markers first. We look at nutritional deficiencies and trying to understand an individualized more functional medicine plan for patients before we even begin to look at what medications might fit in.

Wendy Myers: I love that. I love to hear that so much. I think it is so important.

## 05:50 HAIR MINERAL ANALYSIS

Wendy Myers: And you use hair mineral analysis in your practice, correct?

**James Greenblatt:** Over the years, most of my practice is consultations on patients that have not done well on traditional psychiatric treatment. So I look at a wide range of tests, so patients that I am seeing now for consultation.

We are looking at amino acids and fatty acids in hair mineral analysis, organic acids. So there's a wide range of nutrients that are assessed as well as genetic testing to see individual variations in genetic vulnerabilities.

## 06:25 LITHIUM FOR HEALTH

**Wendy Myers:** I do hair mineral analysis as well and one thing I noticed on the majority of the test I do is the mineral lithium is almost non-existent. Can you talk about why that is and the importance of lithium for our health?

**James Greenblatt:** Sure, nutritional lithium is often confused with the prescription, pharmacological lithium, which is a relatively dangerous medication with side effects as well as an overdose would likely cause someone to die.

So we have this prescription medicine that is considered dangerous, but it's based on this mineral, this element that is critical for brain function. And it is that lithium that we use as a nutritional supplement to help a wide range of neuropsychiatric illnesses.

**Wendy Myers:** Yes. And so what are some of the psychiatric illnesses that can be helped with supplementing with lithium?

**James Greenblatt:** The list sometimes begins to look like it's too good to be true. So I think it is probably easier to take a step back and see lithium as this incredible tonic for the brain.

So it has neuro-protective qualities as well as what we call a neuro proliferation. It helps support neurons, brain cells develop and it repairs them if they are damaged. So we have this incredible wide range of neuro degenerative illnesses from Alzheimer's, to Parkinson's, to depression and anxiety. And lithium does have a role in many of these illnesses.

I would probably say the most important, most consistent findings that I have seen with nutritional lithium are those individuals with histories of irritability and sometimes [moodilability].

So anger management issues are most commonly completely resolved with nutritional lithium.

## 08:26 ANXIETY

**Wendy Myers:** Let's talk about anxiety. Lithium is known to help increase the natural production of your body's GABA. GABA is a neurotransmitter that's very calming to the body. Can you talk about how lithium helps to reduce anxiety that you see in your patients?

**James Greenblatt:** Sure. Again, we see it all the time. One of 10 patients who are anxious and there might be 10 different underlying causes. We would look at a broad range of nutritional deficiencies. It could be B12 deficiency.

And oftentimes we do find this undetectable lithium on the hair mineral analysis you mentioned. And then lithium would be a critically important mineral to add to that personalized approach.

## 09:10 NATURAL SOURCES OF NUTRITIONAL LITHIUM

**Wendy Myers:** And so what are some of the natural sources of lithium, nutritional lithium?

**James Greenblatt:** Great question. I always try and figure it out. So lithium is primarily in our water supplies. It's in our soil. And probably the largest source of lithium is from our water supply.

And it's also in many grains and vegetables. It's not high in meats and animal products. The really important thing to understand about the lithium in the water supply is some of the original studies looked at varying concentrations of water around different communities.

There were original studies that were done in Texas, 20 or 30 different communities in Texas, looking at the lithium in the drinking water. And they were able to correlate the rates of depression, suicide, aggression. It was correlated with low levels of lithium in the drinking water.

**Wendy Myers:** That's very, very interesting. I also heard that lithium can help to detox aluminum from the brain. That's one of its neuro-protective effects.

**James Greenblatt:** The list of what lithium does in the brain is pages and it is exciting if you are excited in neuro chemistry. But certainly one of the things is to stimulate glutathione, which is the major

antioxidant in the brain. And it also decreases inflammation. So certainly, there would be a tremendously important role in some of the heavy metal accumulation in the brain.

**Wendy Myers:** I have also read that it helps to reset your Circadian rhythm. So anyone having sleep disturbances, it can definitely play a role in assisting sleeping better.

**James Greenblatt:** Yes. If we went through the list of all the neurotransmitters in the brain, lithium has this regulatory capacity. So it can stimulate or inhibit the same neurotransmitter when it is needed. Again, it has almost this magical quality in brain function. So certainly sleep and Circadian rhythm is part of that natural cycle and lithium can help reset.

## 11:16 RECOMMENDED FORM AND DOSAGE OF NUTRITIONAL LITHIUM SUPPLEMENTATION

**Wendy Myers:** And so when someone is looking to supplement with nutritional lithium, what form and what amount would you recommend people start with?

**James Greenblatt:** For nutritional lithium, most of the time for adults and adolescents, we use lithium orotate. Most of the supplements that one can find are five milligram pills. And we would use between 5 milligrams and 20 milligrams of lithium orotate.

We are seeing tremendous benefit in younger kids, autistic kids, ADHD kids with irritability and aggression. And sometimes we would use liquid preparations of lithium citrate and that would be between 500 micrograms and 5 milligrams.

**Wendy Myers:** Yeah. And there are some great brands. Seeking Health has a good lithium orotate. Orthomolecular Research also has a good brand for anyone out there that wants to know what to buy because it is not available everywhere.

## 12:12 SYMPTOMS OF LITHIUM DEFICIENCY

**Wendy Myers:** So how does one know if they need nutritional lithium?

**James Greenblatt:** There are lots of ways that one can find out. I think one of the common ways without any testing is looking at your family history. I learned from Jonathan Wright 30 years ago that family history of alcohol or drug use, whether you have a substance abuse problem or not, is one of the best indicators that someone will be responsive to lithium, so family history of depression, mood disorders or substance abuse.

Number two would be what you described, the assessment on a trace mineral analysis, hair test. And three would be clinical symptoms. So if there are symptoms of that anxiety or agitation, irritability tends to be the most common way that I can describe those that are lithium-responsive.

Those three, the family history, the hair test and those clinical symptoms are often the simplest ways to determine if someone needs lithium.

## 13:14 SIDE EFFECTS OF LITHIUM

**Wendy Myers:** So are there any side effects to taking nutritional lithium?

**James Greenblatt:** I have been prescribing it for 30 years. The only side effect that I have heard from a couple of people is that they feel too calm. They actually didn't like the feeling. And when they stopped, they felt back to themselves. But I have never had a side effect.

**Wendy Myers:** Yeah. I haven't noticed any at all. I haven't heard anyone complain when they started lithium. But there are some people that are those type A personalities or people don't like to be up or be manic and going, going, going, they are used to that. They don't like to be slowed down and relaxed.

**Wendy Myers:** So does one need to be under the care of a physician to take nutritional lithium?

**James Greenblatt:** I think that's a really nice question. I think most people would be able to take five milligrams or less of lithium orotate, particularly if they are symptomatic. And I think that could take that for a number of years.

I think for younger children, they are taking long term. I'd probably recommend to probably lessen that, 2.5 milligrams might be better. I think long term lithium for a younger child. We just don't

know what that effect could be. It might be some subtle effects on the thyroid in particular. I think if someone is symptomatic, trying it is fine without being under doctor's care and if it helps, taking it for as long as needed.

## 14:45 IDEAL LITHIUM LEVEL FOR PEOPLE

**Wendy Myers:** And so when you are looking at a hair mineral analysis or other tests, what is the level of lithium that you think is ideal that people should aim for or want to achieve?

**James Greenblatt:** I don't remember the numbers on the hair test. I think I used two different labs, one in Texas, Trace Elements in Great Plains.

In their hair test, most of the time, we are getting detectable levels or many patients now are coming with undetectable lithium levels in their hair. And that's one sign that they might benefit from supplementation.

**Wendy Myers:** Yeah. And I found that most clients have zero and I aim for a 0.014 on a trace elements hair test. That's my goal, but any higher than that can be problematic.

**Wendy Myers:** So why is everyone deficient in lithium? Can you explain that? Maybe it is due to our intensive farming practices? What's going on?

**James Greenblatt:** I don't have a great explanation. I think it's clearly again looking at that same test for 30 years, I am going from occasional undetectable lithium to now the vast majority of people we are seeing.

Some could be our water supply. Some could be the bottled water. So we are not getting the largest source of lithium from our tap waters. Some could be due to other environmental toxins that actually are binding the lithium.

## 16:09 SUICIDE AND LITHIUM DEFICIENCY

**Wendy Myers:** Yes. And so is there anything else that you want to add to our discussion of lithium and its importance in the body?



**James Greenblatt:** I think clinically one of the most important things I can share with you and your audience is lithium's protective properties for suicide. Lithium is a pharmacological agent, one of the only anti-suicide medications that we have. And now research with the water supplies that were described in Texas and have been done around the world consistently demonstrated that the higher lithium in the water, the less suicide.

So we had this epidemic of suicide in our youth increased in the past 15 years over 25%. And I think there's a correlation with this lack of lithium and this dramatic increase of suicide. So it's a really simple very well documented scientific explanation that lithium can prevent suicide.

**Wendy Myers:** Yeah, it is amazing just these simple nutritional deficiencies wreak so much havoc mentally and physically in our bodies. It is such a travesty. They are so easily resolved with testing individualized supplementation.

**James Greenblatt:** And it is so easy to say or particularly to describe that, but it is so difficult for many of my medical colleagues to embrace those simple very effective treatment modalities.

## 17:42 MORE RESOURCES FOR LITHIUM AND DEPRESSION

**Wendy Myers:** You just recently published a book. Can you tell the listeners a little about that?

**James Greenblatt:** I actually have two books that just came out, one on lithium, an overview of all the current research, and then a book on depression. And that is a book written to help individuals understand that personalized, individualized approach to many of these nutritional metabolic deficiencies that might be contributing to an individual's depression.

**Wendy Myers:** Do you talk at all about toxic metals that might contribute to depression, in your book?

**James Greenblatt:** It's a component of the book. Certainly the trace mineral analysis that you described is one of the simplest ways to look at heavy metals.

We do a lot of writing about copper as a problem for agitation and depression. And certainly lead, all the press about lead with our kids. We also see it in adults. And there's mercury and some of the other heavy metals as well.

Wendy Myers: Yes. And so can you tell me the name of your books?

James Greenblatt: The Breakthrough Depression Solution and the lithium book is actually The Cinderella Story.

Wendy Myers: Okay. Thank you so much for coming on the podcast. I really appreciate you giving us some insights about lithium. It's so overlooked, easily overlooked. People are taking vitamins and antioxidants and whatnot, but they are overlooking the minerals, which are the spark plugs of our body that make our body work.

## 19:11 MOST PRESSING HEALTH ISSUE IN THE WORLD TODAY

Wendy Myers: But I have a question I like to ask for all my listeners? What do you think is the most pressing health issue in the world today?

James Greenblatt: I think as we have talked about it, I think the incredible epidemic of these brain-based illnesses, the neuro-degenerative illnesses that can wreak havoc across the globe.

Depression actually in the year 2020 will be the leading cause of disability worldwide. People think of heart disease and cancer and diabetes. The disability actually for depression is going to be the highest. So depression and those brain-based illnesses, I think that are both epidemic and likely due to our lifestyle and our diet, could be prevented.

## 19:57 UNDERLYING CAUSES OF DEPRESSION

Wendy Myers: So can you talk about, in your opinion, the main underlying causes of depression? You mentioned diet and lifestyle. Can you go into some specifics so that maybe someone out there that's listening that's depressed might have a few tips to point them in the right direction?

James Greenblatt: Sure. And I think the thesis in the book is hard to make generalizations. That's what our medical colleagues, but they are thinking everyone with depression has a Prozac deficiency and they give them antidepressant.

And our nutritional colleagues sometimes make the same problem by identifying everybody with depression has a deficiency in B12. And we can't really say that, but there's a whole host of

nutrients and B12 is common. Zinc, magnesium, celiac disease and gluten intolerance is a very common cause of depression causing global malnutrition and malabsorption.

Those are the major nutritional deficiencies. And then we try to understand where any genetic differences might explain the nutritional deficiencies or sensitivities to medications.

## 21:13 DR. GREENBLATT'S APPROACH TO PSYCHIATRY

Wendy Myers:

And so when you are working with the client, what is your initial approach? What kind of go-to test do you like to do, et cetera?

James Greenblatt:

But initial approach is a good history. Oftentimes, patients are coming in and they are using the word anxiety and we see serious depression or obsessive compulsive disorder, ADHD.

So the history really is critical. And as the older I get, it takes me longer and longer. So a family history might take 30 to 40 minutes to get two or three generations of family history. So the history is important.

And the laboratory work that I do is looking across many levels. We look at the GI tract, organic acid, looking at metabolites, bacteria in the gut and yeast in the gut. We look at amino acids, fatty acids, trace minerals, as well as the hair test we talked about. And then routine blood test, iron, B12, vitamin D. And then we get to put together a picture of what might be going on for that individual struggling with depression.

Wendy Myers:

Yeah. I think that is fantastic. It is very rare to hear about it. Psychiatrists or even doctors do functional medical tests. So I love that. That's fantastic.

James Greenblatt:

Great. We are hoping to educate more and more physicians.

## 22:31 WHERE TO FIND DR. JAMES GREENBLATT

Wendy Myers:

So why don't you tell the listeners where they can learn more about you and your website?

**James Greenblatt:** The website is [JamesGreenblattMD.com](http://JamesGreenblattMD.com). We have an overview of some of the books that we have written and some of the courses that we will be setting up primarily for physicians or clinicians over the coming year.

**Wendy Myers:** Thank you so much for joining us on the podcast. And everyone, thank you so much, for tuning in to the Live to 110 Podcast.

You can learn more about me at [Liveto110.com](http://Liveto110.com) and on my healing and detox program, [MineralPower.com](http://MineralPower.com). And don't forget to tune into the [MedicinalSupplementsSummit.com](http://MedicinalSupplementsSummit.com) that I am hosting September 12<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> where I interview 36 of the world's experts on health and nutrition about supplementation, the testing you should do to individualize supplements to your body, how to customize supplements to various health conditions and the top supplements that you should be taking.

Thank you so much for listening to the Live to 110 Podcast.



















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