

Racing for Answers: Gail Devers' Journey to Getting Back on Track Transcript

Every doctor I saw told me:

- Nothing was wrong;
- I was stressed;
- I'd peaked too early with my training;
- Or worst of all, I was imagining things.

As an athlete, I know my body and I **knew** something wasn't right.

It's 1988, I'm an American record holder in the 100 meter hurdles and headed to my first Olympic games in Seoul, Korea. I was living my dream.

But something was 'off.'

Suddenly I was running slower than I ever had, and I didn't make the finals.

I had dropped from 120 pounds to 80 pounds before I stopped looking at the scale.

My face was discolored. My skin was scaly, and my hair was falling out. I was tired all the time and yet I wasn't getting any sleep.

I had trouble with my eyes, too. They hurt. They were bulging, irritated, and dry, and I couldn't close my eyes fully when I slept.

Still, every doctor told me that there was nothing wrong.

Meanwhile, my training came to a stop, I covered up all the mirrors and I just wanted to black out the world. I felt like I had lost myself. I was desperate for answers. I just wanted to get back to being the 'old Gail.'

Every day of my two-and-a half year quest for answers, I visualized myself getting back to the Olympics. I saw myself running my race, and I could see myself crossing that finish line.

Then finally, after almost three years of searching, I was diagnosed with Graves' disease. I still had my goals and my dreams, so now I could start getting my life back on track.

With my Graves' disease under control, and a lot of grit and determination, support from my coach and my family, two years later, I won my first Olympic gold medal.

I remember during my victory lap the camera man said, "Slow down. You're supposed to enjoy this!" And I told him, "Look, you'd better keep up, 'cause you don't know what I've gone through!"

For more than 30 years now, I've been living with, and managing, my Graves' disease. But in all these years, not a single doctor ever mentioned my eye symptoms were separate from Graves'.

I thought my eye symptoms were just part of Graves' disease, but now I know they could be associated with a related, but separate, condition called Thyroid Eye Disease. This is something I wish I'd known all those years ago.

I still struggle with red, irritated eyes, eye pain, and light sensitivity today.

And that's why I want to educate others.

First, know the symptoms of Graves' disease. If you have a combination of weight loss, trouble sleeping, hair and skin issues, talk to your doctor.

Next, if you have Graves' disease, focus on your eye health.

Up to 50% of people with Graves' disease will develop Thyroid Eye Disease.

If you notice any changes in your eyes, like eye bulging, light sensitivity, or eye pain, don't just assume they're part of Graves' disease.

Be your own best advocate. Write down the symptoms and report them to a TED Specialist.

Find a nearby TED specialist at [TEDdoctors.com](https://www.teddoctors.com) and make an appointment.

No one should ever go through what I've been through. But despite all the physical and emotional hurdles I've faced, I wouldn't change my experience. It's only made me stronger.

Now, my goal is to help others get the answers that they deserve. Always look past the hurdle; and focus on what comes next.