
Could you have low testosterone?

Description

Testosterone is a hormone made in a man's testicles. It is important for a man's sex drive and physical appearance.

Certain health conditions, medicines, or injury can lead to low testosterone. Testosterone level also naturally drops with age. Low testosterone can affect sex drive, mood, and the body.

Treatment with testosterone therapy may help reduce symptoms.

How Testosterone Affects Health

Testosterone makes a man look and feel like a man. In a man, this hormone helps:

- Keep bones and muscles strong
- Determine hair growth and where fat is on the body
- Make sperm
- Maintain sex drive
- Make red blood cells
- Boost energy and mood

Causes of Low Testosterone

Beginning around age 30 to 40, a man's testosterone level slowly decreases. This occurs naturally.

Other causes of low testosterone include:

- Medicine side effects, such as from chemotherapy
- Testicle injury or cancer
- Problems with glands in the brain that control hormone production
- Low thyroid function
- Too much body fat (obesity)
- Other disorders, diseases, medical treatments, or infection

Symptoms

Some men with low testosterone do not have any symptoms. Others may have:

- Low sex drive
- Problems having an erection
- Low sperm count
- Sleep problems such as insomnia
- Decrease in muscle size and strength

- Bone loss
- Increase in body fat
- Depression
- Trouble concentrating

Some symptoms may be a normal part of aging. For example, it is normal to feel less interested in sex as you get older. But, it is not normal to have no interest in sex.

Symptoms may also be caused by other conditions, such as high blood pressure. If any of these symptoms are bothering you, talk with your health care provider.

Treatment Options

Your provider will likely have you get a blood test to check your testosterone level. You will also be checked for other causes of your symptoms. These include medicine side effects, thyroid problems, or depression.

If you have low testosterone, hormone therapy may help. The medicine used is man-made testosterone. It can be given as a gel, patch, injection, or implant.

Treatment may relieve symptoms in some men. It may help keep bones and muscles strong. But it is unclear whether hormone therapy is helpful for older men with low testosterone.

Testosterone therapy has risks. It may increase your risk for heart attack or stroke. Hormone therapy may not be safe for men who have prostate or breast cancer.

Talk with your provider about whether testosterone is right for you.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your health care provider if:

- You have symptoms of low testosterone
- You have questions or concerns about treatment

Alternative Names

Male menopause; Andropause; Testosterone deficiency; Androgen deficiency of the aging male; Late-onset hypogonadism

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Reviewed By: Linda J. Vorvick, MD, medical director and director of didactic curriculum, MEDEX Northwest Division of Physician Assistant Studies, Department of Family Medicine, UW Medicine, School of Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, WA. Also reviewed by David Zieve, MD, MHA, Isla Ogilvie, PhD, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team. Editorial update 11/29/2016.



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