

## Andropause: Uncovering the Mystery of Male Menopause

It is well known that women will go through menopause at some point in their lives. But what isn't as well known is that some men between the ages of 40 and 55 will experience a similar phenomenon known as andropause. Although in both cases we see a drop in hormone levels, men do not have a clear event to signal its onset like the end of menstrual cycles in women. Marked by a slow decrease in testosterone levels, this malady continues to be under diagnosed mainly because symptoms tend to be quite vague and men often find it difficult to admit there is a problem. For this reason it is important to have a good understanding of its symptoms and diagnosis that way you can seek help and receive appropriate treatment if needed.

So why is testosterone so important in the first place? Testosterone is a hormone which may be considered as equally important to males as estrogen is to females. It is a unique hormone that has effects on a male's entire body. It helps build protein, promotes hair growth, has effects on mood, produces blood cells, forms bone, aids in lipid/cholesterol metabolism, and is essential for normal sexual behavior. At about age 30, testosterone levels will start to drop by approximately 10% every ten years, meaning that an estimated 30 % of men in their 50s will have testosterone levels low enough to cause or put them at risk for symptoms.

So what are some symptoms associated with low testosterone levels? Although not every man will react the same way, some typical responses to low levels include emotional and behavioral changes, decreased muscle mass and loss of muscle strength, low sex drive, and increased central body fat. These are only a few ways that andropause can affect your quality of life, but there are also some long-term effects that should be taken seriously. Continually low testosterone levels may increase your risk for cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis.

How do I find out if I have andropause? As previously mentioned, low testosterone levels are often under diagnosed and subsequently undertreated. More times than not, a man's symptoms are assumed to be related to another medical condition like depression, or simply attributed to normal ageing. Over the past few years our ability to test testosterone has become more advanced, allowing us to effectively measure your levels. This can be done with a simple saliva test that may be obtained through some community pharmacies. Using the same saliva test that women use to determine estrogen and progesterone levels, we are able to determine the amount of hormone available to your tissues. This is in contrast to blood tests which also measure testosterone bound to proteins, unavailable to our tissues. Saliva testing may also be done in the comfort of your own home rather than making a trip to the lab for blood work.

How would I be treated for andropause? Simply stated, low testosterone levels may be corrected by giving more testosterone. This can be done by using a variety of bio-identical testosterone restoration therapies available through your community pharmacy. By using bio-identical hormones we are able to restore your body with testosterone which is identical to what your body normally produces. This is unlike synthetic testosterone products which undergo changes to their chemical structures. Because these hormones are not identical to what is found in our body, we may not see their full effects with the potential for harmful side effects. After determining your testosterone deficiencies we are able to then compound a custom product to specifically meet your body's needs. After starting testosterone restoration therapy, many men will report good responses. Most will report such examples as an improved mood, with decreased anger, irritability, and sadness, improved quality of sleep, improved sex drive, decreased fat mass, increased muscle strength, as well as increased energy.

This is only an overview of andropause and its related bio-identical testosterone restoration therapy. Be sure to talk to your pharmacist or family physician if you think you may be suffering from

andropause, or would like to have your testosterone levels measured. Remember, your health is our number one concern!

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