

Family Medicine Clerkship Plain Language Summary

Title: Is testosterone supplementation right for me?

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Plain Language Summary:

Testosterone is essential for health and well-being. It is a hormone found in men and women. Much higher levels are found in males. Men make most of their testosterone in the testicles. Testosterone has many effects on the body. These include:

- Development of reproductive organs. In males, testosterone supports the function of the testicles and prostate.
- Promoting bone health
- Preventing age-related muscle loss
- Supporting mental health

Testosterone levels change during your lifetime. Testosterone is increased during puberty. After puberty, middle-aged males show a gradual decrease in testosterone levels. This age-related decline is natural. There are also several unnatural causes of decreased testosterone. These may be investigated by your doctor. Sometimes the level of testosterone becomes too low. When this is seen, it is not normal. Low testosterone has been associated with many unpleasant symptoms. These include:

- Loss of libido.
- Erectile dysfunction.
- Depression.
- Low energy.
- Difficulty concentrating.

You may be experiencing these symptoms. If you are a male 65 years or older, you are at the highest risk. If your level of testosterone is low, it is called hypogonadism. This is a medical condition. Replacing this hormone may help you find relief from these symptoms.

Not everyone should be treated with testosterone. Testosterone therapy has not been studied enough. Scientists study each medicine before doctors can prescribe it. This is done to detect any possible side effects. Scientists have not come to agreement on the safety of testosterone treatment. It may increase your risk of prostate cancer. It also may increase your risk of heart disease.

If your levels of testosterone are normal, testosterone may not provide you relief from your symptoms. To those seeking to be smarter, faster, and stronger, testosterone therapy may seem like an easy fix. However, experts currently recommend against testosterone therapy if you are otherwise healthy. Scientists have not come to agreement on the benefits of testosterone therapy. More research is needed before testosterone is prescribed to patients with normal testosterone levels. The decision to start testosterone should be made with your doctor.

Testosterone supplementation does not reverse ageing. You may have seen an advertisement suggesting testosterone can restore youth. This has not been proven. The benefits of testosterone therapy continue to be unclear.

Additional Resources:

MedlinePLUS:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/lowtestosterone/htm/index.htm>

Mayo Clinic:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/testosterone-therapy/MC00030>

Key Words:

Testosterone, aging, elderly, fatigue, energy

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Family Medicine Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up-to-date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.