

MEN'S HEALTH & TESTOSTERONE



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When I visited the United States last August for advanced training in Men's health, I had the privilege of working with Dr. Paul Turek, at his swank office located near Pier 32 in San Francisco. It was a dream office with a great view of the Pier and the Ferries which did their day trip to Alcatraz. Paul treated a lot of young and OLD men with Reproductive and Sexual health issues. Having treated men in India for a while, the fundamental difference

I noticed about men in America was the fact that they were very open to discuss health issues and sought treatment aggressively. The Bay area was teeming with self made millionaires and more than a few times I saw them ask for TESTOSTERONE implants. These were tiny pellets which went into the fat in the back/butt of the patient. They stayed there for 3-6 months and got released into the bloodstream slowly.

So...What is Testosterone?

Testosterone is a steroid hormone produced predominantly by testis in men and ovaries in women. A small portion of it is also produced by the adrenal gland. It is the main sex hormone in men. Men are likely to be from MARS as their brains are developmentally different from the female brain due to the influence of testosterone in fetal life. The male brain is bigger and said to be more resistant to Alzheimer's. In adults, testosterone contributes to increasing lean body mass, improves physical energy, reduces cholesterol levels and cardiovascular risk, improves bone density, and plays a role in romance and sexual arousal. Also it contributes to an individual's degree of aggressiveness often being labeled as the "Selfish Hormone". Studies show that men with high levels of Testosterone are less likely than their counterparts to part with money. Testosterone helps with sperm maturation and plays a major role in Reproductive health.

What is a normal Testosterone level?

98% of Testosterone in the blood is bound to protein. The unbound form is called free testosterone. Total testosterone is the combination of both bound and free testosterone in the blood at the time of measurement. The values are expressed in terms of ng/dl (nanograms/decilitre). Most labs which test a blood sample for testosterone often give a reference range. For example let us consider lab A to have a reference range of 350-850ng/dl (normal range). However, this reference range is derived from all those men who tested with the lab. Men who were fit, obese, diabetic, non diabetic, had stroke, no stroke, had cardiovascular disease, no cardiovascular disease and so on. You get the picture.....

Hence, even though your test may show values within the reference range it is of utmost importance to understand that these values may not be normal for you.

Symptoms of Low Testosterone

As we get older, testosterone levels decrease. This is evident in the way we move, the way we take a little longer to get out of bed, the way we keep forgetting things, the waistline that pops out suddenly and the last straw being the vigor which goes missing. Sex drive reduces, body fat increases, muscle and bone mass decrease, and this translates to increased cardiovascular risk. These are symptoms of Andropause in men which point towards reducing testosterone levels.

Testosterone Replacement

Just like women get Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), Testosterone can be replaced/replenished in men whose levels are below normal and or those who are symptomatic. Testosterone can be given as injections in the muscle at 6-12 weekly intervals. Gels can be applied over the body and testosterone pellet injections can also be tried.

Here is the good news. Running does affect Testosterone levels. Moderate running 3 to 4 times a week can increase testosterone levels. Along with testosterone, endorphins get released which again add to the feel good factor. However, it is important to remember that running long distances for prolonged periods of time may actually lower levels.

So...my dear male friends, If you have symptoms of low testosterone levels, please don't hesitate to get your levels checked. Based on your doctor's advice testosterone replacement may make a world of difference.

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