



Wellness Minute

Health Information You Can Use On Your Path To Wellness



Natural Ways To Boost Testosterone

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Some people have called testosterone the hormone of desire. So yes, low testosterone in men and women can cause decreased libido, but the bigger issue is aging. The process of aging is largely a tissue breakdown or catabolic process. Testosterone, on the other hand, is anabolic or tissue building. It promotes building body tissues like muscle, skin, and bone for both men and women. Men with low testosterone double their risk of metabolic syndrome. Since testosterone protects brain cells, men with low levels of free testosterone are at an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's.

What are some of the reasons for low testosterone? Stress is a major factor. Long-term chronic stresses caused by poor life-style, ongoing psychological stress, heavy metals, toxins,

inflammation, and infection will decrease testosterone. But short-term stress, as in exercise, can actually increase testosterone.

The starting point for testosterone is cholesterol. Hmm... I wonder how many people taking statins to reduce cholesterol end up with low testosterone? That's an interesting thought isn't it? Cholesterol is converted to pregnenolone. Some of the pregnenolone is converted to progesterone and some to another anabolic hormone DHEA.

Let's follow the progesterone pathway. We need progesterone to make adrenal hormones. So, if you are extremely stressed out, the pregnenolone might be shunted or rerouted to make adrenal hormones, specifically cortisol. This is called the pregnenolone or cortisol steal,

because the body steals pregnenolone to make cortisol, and the rest of the hormones suffer.

You can pause this to look at the chart further, but let's move on. I wanted you to see this chart because this is why anti-stress strategies like deep sleep, meditation, yoga, controlled breathing are so important and should be a part of the picture. All of these practices promote and further anabolic repair. Stress causes breakdown and destruction of tissue.

Coming back to hormones, if your clinician has prescribing privileges, they may recommend bio-identical hormones, and that's great. Personally, I like adaptogenic compounds that feed the pathways needed to make hormones, rather than give

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hormones. Adaptogens are natural substances that provide precursors and cofactors the body needs to return itself to physiologic balance.

One such adaptogenic compound is b-VITAL. b-VITAL contains 750 mg of Peruvian Maca and 50 mg of Velvet Deer antler from living elk. Because Maca has been used as food in Peru for thousands of years we can be assured of its safety. As an adaptogen, it has over 165 citations on Pub Med. It is a natural precursor to testosterone. Men and women have used Peruvian Maca to increase endurance, fertility, and virility. Although we think of it for men, it is also used for women with menopause as well. Velvet Deer antler has been used in traditional Chinese medicine for thousands of years as a tonic providing a revitalizing effect especially for those weakened by illness or other stress.

A preliminary, unpublished study of men ages 45-55, found that supplementation with b-VITAL for 30 days increased salivary free testosterone in 100% of subjects. My experience matches the preliminary study in both men and women. b-VITAL consistently increases saliva levels of free testosterone at 3 capsules twice a day. I generally suggest decreasing the dose to 1 bid after a few months. Don't forget high intensity interval training exercise also increases growth

hormone and downstream hormones like testosterone and reduces insulin.

While we are talking about exercise, another powerful adaptogen is ashwagandha as in Bio-Ashwagandha. One study showed men using resistance training taking ashwagandha had a fourfold increase in testosterone over controls also who were also exercising.

Another consideration to increase lean muscle and strength is Gammanol Forte. 10 out of 10 menopausal women taking Gammanol Forte, 2 tid for 5 weeks, had increases in growth hormone; 8 out of 10 had significant levels of increase.

All three of these products are adaptogens. Bio-Ashwagandha and the components in b-VITAL have shown therapeutic benefit for thousands of years. Gammanol Forte comes from a rice bran extract. More and more of us baby boomers are looking for ways to enhance our life quotient for ourselves and the people we love. In today's changing health care system it's important to study these areas, and then ask your wellness clinician to assess your need for products like these, and then help you develop a strategy to increase how your body repairs naturally. That translates into "slowing down the aging process." And we all like that.