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## **Hormones Part VI: Low Testosterone in Men Linked to Huge Increase in Risk of Death**

by Barbara Minton, Natural Health Editor

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(NaturalNews) There really is a male version of menopause, often called andropause. It is not as pronounced as the menopause experienced by women, but it is none the less real. Men do not like to think about it or talk about it because it makes them seem less manly. They are reluctant to do anything about it, and when they do, it is to ask for a prescription for Viagra rather than attempting to address the underlying causes of their declining energy, weight gain, irritability and failing sexual performance. A recent study may jar them into action. Researchers have found that low testosterone levels in men are associated with high risk of death from all causes.

From about the age of 30 on, men experience a decrease in their sex hormone levels of approximately 1.5 percent per year. The declining testosterone level is responsible for decreased muscle mass and bone density, insulin resistance, and feelings of depression. Prescriptions for Viagra merely redirect blood flow for a short period of time. They do nothing to address the real issues men face during this time period. Yet, this is a critical time period in their lives, a time period during which the seeds for early death are sown.

### **Large study documents the association between lower testosterone and higher mortality**

As reported in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, researchers at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System and the University of Washington at Seattle, evaluated whether low testosterone levels are a risk factor for mortality in male veterans. They studied the relationship between hormone levels and death in a total of 858 males over the age of 40. All participants received care in the VA Puget Sound Health Care System and had their testosterone levels checked at least twice between 1994 and 1999, with no more than two years elapsing between testing. These men were followed for average period of 4.3 years, with some followed for the full eight years of the study. None of the men had been diagnosed with prostate cancer.

19% of the men were classified as having low testosterone levels. 28% were classified as equivocal, meaning they had an equal number of test results in the low and normal ranges. 52.7% were classified as having testosterone levels in the normal range. Men who died during the first year of the study were excluded from the data. Results were adjusted for such co-variates as age, and medical morbidity.

Men in the low testosterone group had an 88 percent increased risk of death compared to the group who had normal testosterone levels. This is a highly statistically significant, jaw dropping result that persisted after the other variables that may have influenced risk of death, such as age, other illnesses and body mass index were considered.

Testosterone levels are known to decrease following a traumatic or highly stressful event, and this may increase the risk of death during such periods. However, in a follow up analysis of the data, this factor was also adjusted for. Men with low testosterone levels were still found to be 68 percent more likely to have died. This finding points to the conclusion that the association between low testosterone and mortality is not simply due to acute illness, and cannot be easily justified or ignored by men in denial.

## **Andropause is like puberty in reverse**

The changes brought by andropause are so gradual they usually go unnoticed for several years. It is as though the life just very slowly drains away. Men who used to come home from work and have active lives with their families, take care of household problems, deal with financial issues, or maybe work a second job, gradually end up spending most of their evenings in front of the TV set or asleep on the couch. When asked why they are not getting their usual responsibilities taken care of, they have no answer except irritability. Since andropause is rarely discussed and often denied, these men have no idea what is happening to them.

There is a cognitive aspect involved with declining hormones in men just like in women. Women are often amazed when their men fail to see the obvious and appear oblivious to much of what is going on. And men and women are equally amazed at his frequent need to urinate.

Men in andropause exercise but see little to no improvement in muscle development or definition. If they can detect any improvement immediately after exercise, it is gone by the next day. Without discernable payback, men in andropause gradually give up their exercise along with other aspects of their lives.

A man in andropause will not have the strong morning erections that characterized his youth. He may have the mental desire for sexual activity, but the physical response is not there or it is there but muted. Andropause has a broad affect, impacting hormonal levels, psychology, interpersonal relationships, social activity, sexual activity, and spiritual connectedness.

## **The traditional medical establishment can only mask the symptoms of andropause**

The rare man who is willing to discuss his problems with a physician finds that he is given a drug to mask each individual symptom. In addition to the prescription for Viagra, he will most likely be given an antidepressant, another drug to deal with frequent urination, maybe something for the prostate, and even a statin drug to bring down the numbers on his cholesterol test. These drugs do nothing to deal with the real issue, which is declining hormone levels. While a man takes these drugs, the loss of testosterone continues to work behind the scenes. When hormones levels are sagging, the body is under constant stress. This results in rising cortisol and insulin levels, weight gain, and cardiovascular issues. Declining testosterone is the basis of the heart attacks men so frequently have in middle age.

Declining hormone level is the hallmark during this period of premature death. The death certificate may say the man has died from heart attack or other degenerative disease, but the real cause is hormonal decline and the havoc it creates in the body. As men hit their late thirties and early forties they are approaching the peak of their careers, a time when stress is at its highest. It is also a time period for them when responsibility for family and even aging parents is also at its highest. It is a time that requires optimal and balanced hormone levels.

## **It does not have to be this way**

Hormonal loss in men is so gradual that they do not realize what is happening to them. They attribute their symptoms to aging and try to forget about them. But hormonal decline will only continue and lead to the almost inevitable result of declining health and disease. It is only bioidentical testosterone replacement that can address this condition successfully and eliminate the root cause of the problems.

Testosterone is an anabolic steroid. It builds bone and muscle. The heart is the largest muscle in the body, so testosterone is critical to keep it strong and able to do its job. Testosterone keeps the heart healthy by keeping cholesterol and blood pressure low. It increases blood flow to the heart. It restores and stimulates testosterone receptor sites in the nerves, blood vessels and genitals. It makes it possible to again build and keep muscle mass when exercising, and it keeps bones strong.

Testosterone is what sends the signal to nature saying this man is still young and virile, the kind of guy that needs to be kept around.

The link between testosterone decline and prostate problems is well established. The prostate is the male equivalent of the breast in females. It has ducts in which testosterone makes food for the sperm. When testosterone levels are declining, prostate problems begin. There is no food for the sperm, and no semen. Younger men with their full complement of hormones rarely get prostate cancer or other signs of prostate problems. Their ration of testosterone to estrogen is in balance. They do not run out of semen and they are fully functioning sexually.

Prostate disease is not inevitable. Many studies have shown that testosterone replacement keeps prostate disease away. It can restore in men the sexual vigor they had when much younger.

The disease establishment is in the grip of the pharmaceutical companies who promote the idea that prostate problems are caused by testosterone. By taking this approach they can be assured that men will stay in a declining state of health as they age, and they will need a constantly increasing supply of drugs. Natural testosterone is not able to be patented because it is a naturally occurring substance. There is little or no money to be made from keeping men health by supplementing their declining testosterone levels. The money is to be made by selling patented drugs, and keeping men in a state of decline until they need by-pass surgery. Although it is an extremely disillusioning realization, the pharmaceutical companies are in it for the money. They do not seem to care at all about what happens to people.

One aspect of testosterone decline is the conversion of testosterone to estrogen. Excessive estrogen conversion is what gives men enlarged breasts. The latest research suggests that it is too much estrogen that causes excessive proliferation of prostate cells. It is only when testosterone levels decline and conversion of testosterone to estrogen increases that prostate problems appear. In Europe, where medicine is not so heavily influenced by pharmaceutical companies, testosterone is being used to treat prostate cancer with glowing results.

The flabby stomach and enlarged breasts of middle aged men are a signal that their estrogen levels are too high. Many men over fifty have estrogen levels that are even higher than those of women over fifty. This elevated estrogen level along with declining testosterone can increase the risk of heart attack and stroke and lead to inflammation of the prostate and the rest of the body. Too much estrogen can also depress testosterone production. A man can become estrogen dominate just as a woman can. Other symptoms of excess estrogen that will sound very familiar to women are hair loss, headaches, irritability, bloating and puffiness. Men also experience these symptoms.

Males produce a small amount of progesterone that is essential to their health. Progesterone along with testosterone helps balance the build up of estrogen. Progesterone is a precursor for cortisol, testosterone, and other hormones. Levels of progesterone fall off too as men age, and this drop causes a drop in other hormone levels.

### **Achieving hormonal balance for men**

The art of bioidentical hormonal replacement is to replace hormones to the level they were when a man was in his prime, in his early twenties. Testosterone levels can be established by blood and saliva tests. The optimal range for men is between 6,000 and 9,000 pg.mL. This is the level at which men can reach their prime again. To achieve this level will require the help of a physician who specializes in anti-aging medicine or hormone replacement.

Tradition doctors just do not get it. You might be able to talk one of them into prescribing some hormones but the prescription will probably be for a hormone drug, not bioidentical hormones that are exact replicas of what the body makes naturally. Hormone drugs are substitutions for hormones; they are not replacements. And if your traditional doctor agrees to prescribe hormones at all, he will probably only want to you take enough to bring you up to the level that is considered *normal* for your age, not the level that would take you to your prime. It is only when hormones are replace to that prime level that vibrant health can be achieved again.

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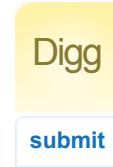
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## About the author

Barbara is a school psychologist, a published author in the area of personal finance, a breast cancer survivor using "alternative" treatments, a born existentialist, and a student of nature and all things natural.

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