

What Every Man Needs to Know About Natural Testosterone Production & Health

Testosterone is vital for building and maintaining muscle mass. But this vital sex hormone is necessary for so much more than just bulking up. Testosterone is a critical biological element that all men (and to a lesser degree, women) need in order to stay healthy and vibrant.

To put it simply, testosterone is the essence of maleness. It's the fundamental life force that makes a man a man, and the driving energy that keeps us guys fit, strong, and virile. Without it, we simply wouldn't exist (at least not as men, anyway).

While our bodies are designed to produce testosterone and maintain it at optimal levels, there are many factors that can interfere with this natural testosterone production process. Exposure to toxins, poor diet, stress, and aging are among the most common.

These factors directly inhibit the body's production of testosterone and various other male hormones, which we collectively refer to as *androgens*. If left unchecked, this androgenic decline can lead to all sorts of health problems for men. This is why it's so important to adopt healthy lifestyle habits that counteract the decline of natural testosterone and other hormones.

Where Does Natural Testosterone Come From, and What Does It Do for a Man's Health?

Before I address how to go about doing this, I'd like to explain a little more about how testosterone is manufactured inside the body and what it does besides create muscle tissue. Like with many other steroid hormones, testosterone production begins in the hypothalamus, a tiny region of the forebrain that stimulates many important processes throughout the body.

In addition to regulating hormone production via the endocrine system, the hypothalamus governs many different homeostatic systems, including those that regulate sleep, emotions, and the central nervous system.

Whenever it detects that the body needs more testosterone to perform a given job, the hypothalamus ramps up production by secreting what's known as gonadotropin-releasing hormone, or GnRH. This GnRH travels to the back of the brain where it encounters the pituitary gland, which uses it to produce two additional hormones:

- Follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH)
- Luteinizing hormone (LH)

Both FSH and LH then make their way down to the testes via the bloodstream where they are used to manufacture both sperm and free testosterone.

One particularly interesting fact about testosterone is that the primary substance our bodies use to make testosterone is one that often gets a bad rap in mainstream medical circles: *cholesterol*. The primary building block of testosterone – cholesterol – is what the Leydig cells in a man's testicles rely on (along with LH) to synthesize testosterone production.

Once generated, this testosterone re-enters the bloodstream in free form where the body is able to use it for many important tasks including to:

- Build strong bones
- Create lean muscle mass
- Strengthen the heart
- Generate new blood cells

Testosterone is also where manly characteristics like boldness, assertiveness, and competitiveness originate – not to mention the ever-present sexual drive that characterizes healthy manhood.

Common Symptoms of Low Testosterone in Men

In a perfect world, optimal natural testosterone production in men would happen all on its own. Every man would eat a healthy diet at all times, get adequate rest, drink plenty of clean water, exercise regularly, and never be stressed, encounter toxins, or grow older. In this ideal scenario a man would never have to think twice about his hormones because they'd be virtually flawless. Unfortunately, the world is far from perfect. And the reality, truth be told, is that natural testosterone production is under massive assault on many fronts.

Low testosterone in men is more common today than it's probably ever been. Many men's bodies simply can't keep up with their testosterone needs. Or when they can, too much of this testosterone ends up being converted to non-usable forms of testosterone, or worse: it's converted to *estrogen*.

The result is that many men end up suffering from various degrees and symptoms of low testosterone.

Signs of low testosterone include:

- Lack of energy
- Moodiness and irritability
- Depression
- Brain "fog"
- Muscle atrophy
- Obesity
- Loss of libido

As disastrous as these health consequences are, if left unchecked they can eventually give way to even worse symptoms that develop into serious chronic illness. We're talking things that a typical "man's man" absolutely dreads such as:

- Cardiovascular events
- Dementia
- Infertility
- Gynecomastia (aka "man boobs")

These and other advanced-stage symptoms of low natural testosterone are becoming all too common in our modern world, and yet viable options for men who suffer from these symptoms are few and far between.

What Are the Options to Boost Testosterone in Men?

Aside from hormone replacement therapy (HRT), there really isn't much else being offered conventionally to testosterone-deficient men that will actually help them recover. While HRT may be appropriate in certain cases, it's often used as a band-aid to simply cover up the symptoms of low testosterone without actually getting to the root of the problem. It also typically involves the use of synthetic testosterone compounds, which can be questionable in terms of their safety.

Another problem is the way that symptoms of low testosterone (especially those that affect a man's behavior and personality) are sometimes misjudged as character flaws that men need to just "man up" and face. Testosterone functions as the energy force to give a man the confidence and wherewithal to face tough situations in the first place. As a result, being deficient in natural testosterone means that a man isn't necessarily capable of performing what society demands of him, and thus needs help.

It's a devastating situation in both regards that only serves to reinforce a negative feedback loop for testosterone-deficient men, which can actually worsen their symptoms. What men with low testosterone really need is solid guidance and instruction in identifying where the problem lies and what they can do about it. In most cases this requires that they make some serious dietary and lifestyle changes.

Getting Your Life Back: 4 Ways to Boost Natural Testosterone Levels

So what's a man to do? If you're seriously deficient in testosterone, bioidentical HRT under the strict guidance of a properly trained physician may be a good starting point. Otherwise it mostly boils down to these three things: diet, exercise, and sleep. If you can purpose to discipline yourself to address each of these things with clarity and resolve, you'll already be well on your way to achieving more energy, less body fat, more muscle, and perhaps the biggest motivating factor: a robust sex drive.

I must stress that even if you don't currently have low natural testosterone levels, it's still critically important to eat right, stay active, and get plenty of rest in order to avoid developing it at some point down the road. Even if you don't think you have low testosterone, it's still a good idea to follow the steps below (and to have your levels checked just for good measure).

Natural Testosterone Booster #1: Eat more saturated fat, cholesterol, veggies, and nuts
Contrary to what you may have heard in the news or from your doctor, saturated fat and cholesterol aren't your enemies. In fact, many foods rich in these two substances that popular culture has deemed as unhealthy – eggs, red meat, and butter, for instance – are some of the most nutritious and androgen-friendly foods you can feed your body. (The caveat here is that these animal products need to be from pastured animals that are free from hormones, antibiotics, and that themselves are consuming a quality diet.)

Studies suggest that avoiding saturated fat and cholesterol can actually damage testosterone production and lead to deficiency. Vegetarians are likely candidates for this, as the standard vegetarian diet is typically lacking in both of these vital dietary elements. This doesn't mean you should avoid vegetarian (plant) foods. Nuts, cruciferous vegetables, and leafy greens are all extremely beneficial in helping to boost testosterone levels.

Natural Testosterone Booster #2: Combine plenty of clean protein with resistance exercise

If testosterone is the engine that gets muscle production going, protein is the fuel. The two definitely go hand in hand when it comes to building anabolic strength, and studies suggest that consuming clean protein bearing the full spectrum of essential amino acids – whey protein isolate is a great example of this – may help to boost testosterone levels when combined with resistance exercise.

Science shows that testosterone levels in men tend to reach their peak about 30 minutes after they exercise. A solid training approach that can help to maximize these peak levels includes working large muscle groups using compound movements rather than isolation exercises. For example, lifting heavy weights in sets of six with between 6-8 repetitions each; and resting for no longer than about one minute between each set of exercises.

Natural Testosterone Booster #3: Get at least 5 hours of restful sleep per night

A lot of guys overlook the importance of sleep. “I’ll sleep when I’m dead,” many of them would say. But letting your body rest is critical both for muscle building and testosterone production. Not only does restful sleep help your body to manage and overcome stress – including by minimizing stress hormones like cortisol that wreak havoc on testosterone – but it also helps your body to produce more testosterone. Researchers from the University of Chicago found that young men who get less than five hours of restful sleep per night have up to 15 percent less testosterone in their bodies than their well-rested counterparts.

Natural Testosterone Booster#4: Avoid xenoestrogens and take natural vitamins and supplements

Endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDC) are everywhere these days. Plastics, pesticides, and personal care products are loaded with them, which is why I suggest avoiding them and sticking with natural alternatives. Furthermore, supplementing with testosterone-supportive trace minerals like zinc, selenium, and B vitamins, as well as herbs like *tribulus terrestris* and stinging nettle, can help to counteract these effects and give your body that little extra androgen boost.