

# Hormone Changes as Men Get Older

## How do male hormones change as a man gets older?

Men start having less of the male hormone testosterone as they get older. If you have a chronic illness, your testosterone levels may go down even more.

Less testosterone in the body may cause problems with erections. For example:

- Erections may happen less often.
- When you are sexually stimulated, it may take longer to have an erection and the erection may be less firm.
- It may be easier to lose an erection.
- Ejaculation (the release of semen during orgasm) may be less forceful.

You may also find that you don't have as much interest in sex as you used to. Nonetheless, there's a good chance you can keep having an active, enjoyable sexual life as you get older.

## How is reduced testosterone found and treated?

The level of testosterone in your body can be measured with a blood test. If your level of testosterone is definitely low, you may have some other tests to check on how your hormones and glands are performing. If you have problems caused by a very low level of testosterone, like weakness and tiredness, your provider may suggest testosterone replacement therapy (TRT). You don't have to take TRT. It can improve erections and sexual performance, but TRT has risks. For example, it may increase your chances of having prostate cancer.

TRT is available as shots, patches, or gels. Talk to your healthcare provider about which kind of medicine might work best for you. Also, check your insurance coverage for the different medicines.

TRT may not be right for you if you have high cholesterol or heart disease, or if you are at risk for prostate cancer. TRT may make the prostate get bigger and cause urination problems. Or it might increase your risk for prostate cancer. Take testosterone only if your healthcare provider approves.

Men taking testosterone should be examined for signs of a tender or enlarged prostate. If you have a family history of prostate cancer, you might want to have a PSA (prostate specific antigen) test.

## What about DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone)?

DHEA is a hormone that the body turns into testosterone and estrogen, the female hormone. As a result, DHEA has a mix of male and female hormonal effects. It is a popular supplement in health food stores, but quality control varies. Most of the claims of its anti-aging effects have not been proven in good medical studies. Studies of dementia, overall well-being, muscle size and strength, body fat composition, and bone density show either no or very little effect. Studies do show that DHEA usually lowers the "good" cholesterol—that is, HDL—in most

people. Good studies on how DHEA might affect the prostate or heart disease have not been done. Given this body of evidence, many healthcare providers do not recommend DHEA supplements.

Developed by RelayHealth.

*This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.*