

Andropause? What's that?

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We've all heard of menopause; that dreaded time of life for women when we feel like something or someone else has taken over our bodies, sometimes beginning as early as our 30's...mood swings, fatigue, mental fog, depression, weight gain, night sweats, low libido, and then eventually, a decade or so later, hot flashes begin and the misery steps up a notch!

What about the guys in all of this mess? Why don't they have to suffer like we do? Don't they age too? Well, the answer is **ABSOLUTELY!** Males begin their hormone decline on average at age 35, losing 2% of testosterone production per year. Why is that important? Isn't testosterone just for sexual health? Not necessarily, let me explain: Testosterone, produced primarily by the male ovary and the male testicles, and to a lesser degree by the adrenal glands (yes ladies females make and **NEED** testosterone!), has many functions in our bodies beyond sexual health. Primarily, it is a **BRAIN** hormone, and as we age and production declines, we feel those brain symptoms!

Do any of these sound familiar: mental fog, decreased mental clarity and difficulty focusing, memory loss (where did I park my car? Where did I put my keys? Why did I come in this room?) mood swings, irritability, depression, anxiety and extreme fatigue (especially in the afternoon around 3-4 o'clock) sleep disturbances, just to name a few! Men do not typically lose their sex drive, so don't use that as a marker for hormone balance! Women **AND** men experience varying degrees of these symptoms, and it can significantly decrease our overall sense of well being and wreak havoc on relationships of all kinds!

Often, when we seek help from our primary practitioners, we are band-aided with antidepressants, sleeping and anti-anxiety pills and a host of other medications. These drugs have additional side effects such as weight gain, zombie like state, dependency

for sleep, decreased sex drive and so forth, not a good remedy! Furthermore, they do not address the root problem that is causing the symptoms!

Several studies show NATURAL testosterone to be protective and preventative of many disease states! To name a few: men with low testosterone are 3 times more likely to get Alzheimer's dementia, women suffer similar risks; in a recent study, men over 55 with higher levels of testosterone showed significant reduction in coronary artery disease risk and heart attacks; testosterone builds bone by 8.3% per year, preventing and reversing osteopenia and osteoporosis. What about that 40 year old paunch in the middle? Low testosterone increases cortisol and insulin levels, both of which increase belly fat and increase your risk of type 2 diabetes! Further, good news for women, countless studies show testosterone to protect the breasts from breast cancer. Breast cancer tissue can have both estrogen and insulin receptors, natural testosterone has been shown to down-regulate estrogen receptors in the breasts and decrease insulin levels. The more we study this vital hormone, the more we learn it protects the brain, breasts, bones, heart and decreases the risk of a host of age related disease states!

So how do I know if my hormones are out of whack, you ask? First of all, seek an expert in hormone balance. If you feel off, pay attention to how you feel and think twice about filling the prescriptions given to quell symptoms if they tell you "your hormones are normal". What is "normal" for the average population in your age group may not be "normal", or optimal, for you. For instance, we know an optimal testosterone level in males is around 800-1100 (ten times higher than women), a "normal" lab reference range can be anywhere from 200-1100 for men, depending on the reporting lab! Men are typically symptomatic under 400 and women under 40, but that's in the "normal range"!

You also want to consider a natural hormone balance method that keeps your levels in the optimal range 24/7. That is where we see the long term health benefits stated above; methods that put your hormones on a roller coaster by taking something every day, or a shot every week, although sometimes better than nothing, don't give us the benefit of balanced hormones 24 hours a day. Additionally, complete thyroid panels and vitamin D3 levels should be checked as there is a synergy between them all and again, "normal" reference ranges may not be optimal for you.

The message here is, pay attention to how you feel, educate yourself, do your research, and most importantly, find a practitioner who will sit down with you, listen and help you understand what is happening during this time in your life and how to best address it without adding a multitude of unnecessary medications and side effects.