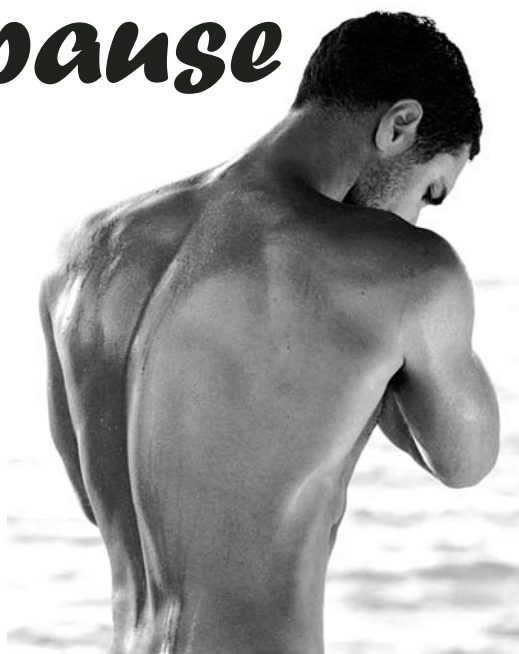


Andropause

The Male Counterpart to Menopause

by Dalal Akoury, MD



Historically, men's notorious dislike for medical care and attention, especially when it comes to changes in sexual desire and performance, has prevented andropause from receiving the attention it deserves.

Testosterone is the magic elixir that makes men, men, in every aspect. From conception to death, it affects nearly every facet of the male existence, and over the course of years, floods and recedes, tipping the hormonal balance. Peaking at age 25 for most men, testosterone begins a slow decline, becoming most noticeable in middle age, when symptoms of "male menopause," or "andropause," become evident.

Testosterone is produced in the gonads and is derived from cholesterol. In women, the relationship between the ovaries, estrogen, the brain and the pituitary gland is nearly the same as the one between the testes, testosterone, the brain and the pituitary gland in men. Both sexes have estrogen and testosterone, but at greatly different levels, and that delicate balance becomes disturbed with the onset of andropause and menopause.

Medically speaking, andropause is a popular term for the male counterpart to female menopause, and refers to the condition of decreased androgen hormones androstenedione, dehydroepiandrosterone and testosterone. Testosterone levels decline beginning around age 25 at a rate of approximately 1.6 percent per year. Unlike the sudden, precipitous loss of estrogen that women hitting menopause face, the gradual loss of testosterone may take years to exert its full effect on men.

Men and the male-dominated medical community have always recognized that women suffer from hormonal changes associated with increasing age, but have neglected the gradual decline of sex hormones in men. Men often also look upon the idea of "male menopause" as something unmanly. Nothing could be further from the truth. All men will

experience testosterone-level changes as they age.

Gradually Increasing Symptoms

As a result, andropause has been overlooked as an actual medical condition. Historically, men's notorious dislike for medical care and attention, especially when it comes to changes in sexual desire and performance, has prevented andropause from receiving the attention it deserves. When sex hormones decline, medical conditions such as muscle loss, decreased cognitive function, decreased bone density, increased coronary artery disease risk and heart attack risk all increase. While all men experience a decline in testosterone production as they age, the rate of decline can vary greatly due to such factors as genetic differences, the environment, nutrition and physical conditioning. These differences affect the severity of some of the following symptoms:

- ♂ Fatigue, loss of confidence and sense of well-being
- ♂ Joint aches and stiffness of hands
- ♂ Hot flashes, sleep disturbances
- ♂ Depression, irritability and anger, and intimacy problems
- ♂ Reduced libido, weaker erections and orgasms, and reduced potency
- ♂ Higher risk of heart disease
- ♂ Premature aging, changes in hair and skin, and osteoporosis
- ♂ Weight gain

Factors that Worsen Andropause

Aromatase is an enzyme that is responsible for a key step in the biosynthesis of an estrogen component, estradiol, from testosterone and can be responsible for actually lowering levels of testosterone. This process takes place in the fat stores of the body, and the more fat present, the more testosterone-

reducing reactions take place. Elevated levels of estradiol are thought to also promote prostatic disease.

Reversing Andropause


Weight-bearing exercise, or “pumping iron,” is a time-tested method for increasing naturally produced testosterone and reducing excess fatty weight. Another necessary step to reducing the excessive loss of testosterone is to reduce environmental sources of estrogenic chemicals. One should be mindful of the roughly 50 chemicals, called xenoestrogens, that when introduced into the human body mimic estrogen and block testosterone receptors. Primary sources for these youth-robbing xenoestrogens include many pesticides, synthetic hormones found in industrial farmed meat and meat products, plastics, cosmetics and in trace amounts in tap water. Choosing certified pure, organic, or natural foods and products, can help reduce exposure.

Once aware of andropause, men can take active steps to reduce the symptoms and prolong or restore youthful characteristics. Ideally, the first step should be to seek care from a Functional Medical Physician, who has specialized training in anti-aging therapies, to verify conditions and evaluate options. Functional medicine is personalized medicine that deals primarily with prevention and underlying causes instead of symptoms for serious chronic disease.

Clean and balanced nutrition, professionally directed weight-bearing exercise and compounded bio-identical customized hormone replacement may prove to be a winning recipe in achieving properly balanced hormone levels. Allowing hormone levels to remain deficient or altered can affect other hormonal functions, and may cause disease and several types of cancers.

Dr. Dalal Akoury is the founder of AWAREmed, a holistic medical practice located at North Beach Plantation, 719 North Beach Blvd, Suite 6, with Cinzia the Spa and Beach Fit in North Myrtle Beach. For more info, call 843-361-2772 or visit AWAREmed.com. See ad page 11.

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