

## What You Need to Know About Low Testosterone

### What does testosterone do?

The hormone testosterone affects typical male characteristics: facial and body hair, a deep voice, muscle mass, and bone strength. It also triggers sperm production, which establishes your fertility. Testosterone also greatly influences your desire for sex.

### What causes low testosterone (a condition sometimes called low T or hypogonadism)?

For a lot of men, testosterone production decreases with age.

#### Other causes include:

- Brain injuries and tumors
- Chemotherapy, radiation therapy
- Chronic liver and kidney disease
- HIV/AIDS
- Obesity
- Testicular trauma or infection
- Type 2 diabetes

Some medicines cause low T, including opioid pain medicines (morphine, methadone) and strong anti-inflammatory drugs (prednisone).

Several genetic conditions also cause low T: hemochromatosis, Kallmann syndrome, Klinefelter syndrome, myotonic dystrophy, and Prader-Willi syndrome.

### What symptoms would I have if I don't have enough testosterone?

Although symptoms can vary from one man to another, the most immediate effects of low T include a drop in sex drive and trouble with erections.

You may also notice breast enlargement, loss of facial and body hair, and an overall sense of fatigue.

Eventually, a man with low T will gain body fat and lose muscle mass and strength. With chronic low T, you can develop bones that break easily (osteoporosis), depression and irritability, a drop in energy, and smaller testicles.

### How would my doctor check my testosterone level?

If you have symptoms of low T, your doctor will take a sample of blood to check your testosterone level on at least 2 different mornings before 10:00 am, when you have the highest levels. Normal levels are between 300 and 1000 ng/dL.

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## Men's Sexual and Urinary Health: Low T

If you're taking medicines that lower testosterone levels, your doctor may ask you to stop taking them for a few days before the blood tests.

At the same appointment, your doctor will assess your overall health and examine your secondary male characteristics: Body hair, breasts, penis size, and testicular size and firmness. Your doctor will also check the size and consistency (lumpiness) of your prostate gland by giving you a digital rectal exam.

### What else will my doctor need to know?

**You should be prepared to answer questions about:**

- Current and past medical conditions, surgeries, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and medical conditions in your family members
- Prescription and over-the-counter medicines you take
- Recent illnesses, nutritional changes, depressed mood
- Your sexual development, beginning with puberty
- Sexual problems, including problems with erections
- Changes in your body, including muscle weakness, loss of body hair, breast enlargement or tenderness, changes in body fat, changes in your testicles

### What's the next step if I have low T?

If you have low T, the first goal is to treat any underlying causes, like diabetes, nutritional deficiency, liver disease, kidney disease, or a medicine you take. You and your doctor will also talk about the choices you have for testosterone replacement.