

## TESTOSTERONE



Testosterone is part of a group of sex hormones called androgens which everyone produces naturally. It is an important hormone for both men and women and is essential for maintenance of female health.

Although it may sound surprising, prior to menopause women actually produce more testosterone than oestrogen and once you enter the menopausal stage, the amount of both hormones that your body produces starts to decline rapidly.

Both oestrogen and testosterone are produced by the ovaries and once you become perimenopausal your ovarian function will gradually reduce, therefore your levels of both hormones will also start to decline and then remain low.

### WHY IS TESTOSTERONE IMPORTANT?

Testosterone has an important role to play in many different aspects of your health. As well as assisting your cognitive function and affecting how you concentrate, it also helps your energy levels and improves the quality of your sleep. In addition, testosterone is important in helping maintain your bone strength and muscle mass, as well as supporting your cardiovascular health. Low levels of testosterone can also affect your sex life, both through reduced desire and also decreased enjoyment.

### DO I NEED TESTOSTERONE?

Not every woman going through the menopause will suffer from low-testosterone symptoms. Although testosterone replacement is not currently licensed for NHS use in the UK, many clinicians and menopause experts choose to prescribe it based on the benefits it has been shown to provide during clinical trials.

With very few side effects, adding testosterone into your HRT regime can often provide even more menopause symptom relief than when taking oestrogen alone.

#### SYMPTOMS:

- Lack of energy
- Poor quality of sleep
- Brain fog / lack of concentration
- Reduced libido (sex drive)
- Loss of bone strength
- Reduced muscle mass
- Poor cardiovascular health
- Low mood

Before considering treatment with testosterone you will have a full review of your symptoms and a discussion around the pros and cons of this type of therapy. You will also have some blood tests to set a “benchmark” of how your hormone levels look at the start of treatment which can then be checked against a repeat set of bloods at your review.

## TESTOSTERONE MEDICATION

The most common method of administering testosterone is through transdermal application; usually via a cream or gel which you rub into your skin and which is then absorbed into your bloodstream.

In the UK AndroFeme®1 cream is a regulated preparation, licensed for use by women. Alternatives include Testogel® and Testim® gel which initially were designed for use by men but can also be used safely by women in lower doses. AndroFeme®1 cream contains almond oil and it is therefore essential that you let us know if you have an allergy to almonds.



Testosterone is also available as a six-monthly implant which is a small pellet that is placed just under the skin.

## TREATMENT APPLICATION

- Apply your testosterone treatment exactly as you have been advised, ideally at the same time each day on to clean, dry skin on either the buttocks or thighs.
- Do not shower or swim for at least 30 minutes following application.
- Wash hands thoroughly after use and avoid perfumed products or lotions in the application area.
- Regularly change the area of skin where you apply the treatment to avoid irritation or side effects.

## MONITORING AND REVIEWS



Once you have started testosterone replacement treatment it can take around 3-6 months to start to notice the effects and be able to evaluate its benefits. During this time it is important that you have regular reviews with us to ensure that the treatment is right for you. We will also ask you to attend for some blood tests to check that your body is absorbing the testosterone sufficiently and to also ensure that you do not start to build up too much within the bloodstream as your dose may need to be adjusted.

Side effects of testosterone treatment are minimal but can include excess hair growth (in the area of application) and acne. More severe side effects can include excess facial hair, alopecia or a deepening of the voice. However, for the majority of women, adverse side effects are uncommon as long as levels within the blood are maintained within the female physiological standard range. It is therefore important to attend your regular reviews as any unwanted side effects can be reversed by a reduction in dosage.

## HYPOACTIVE SEXUAL DESIRE DISORDER (HSDD)

It is common for most people to go through periods in their life when their sex drive is reduced or they are less interested in sex. However, if you find that you have had a total lack of interest in sex for over six months and it is impacting on your relationship or self esteem then you may be diagnosed with Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder.

Symptoms of HSDD include having no desire to enter into any type of sexual activity, no sexual desire or thoughts and difficulty in achieving pleasure. Sometimes it may be that other medication you are taking that has affected your libido or perhaps a different HRT regime may be required, but if you think that the symptoms of HSDD may apply to you please speak to us so that we can talk things through and suggest a treatment plan tailored to you.