



Women's Wellness Center
www.womenswellnessnow.com

Testosterone Replenishment for Women

You may think of testosterone as the “male-only” hormone, but women produce this hormone in small amounts, mostly from the ovaries, and a little from the adrenal glands. When production falls, which is natural with aging, symptoms such as decreased libido, diminished orgasm, decreased energy levels, or mood instability may be experienced. Testosterone depletion is only one of a multitude of factors that can lead to sexual dysfunction in women. When a woman is unsatisfied with her level of sexual desire it's important to address any emotional, relational, or lifestyle factors that may be contributing. For those with low production of testosterone, studies have shown that testosterone replenishment can improve libido, energy level, and sense of well-being. Other benefits include improving bone health and improving skin health by stimulating collagen production.

With any hormone replenishment, I recommend using bio-identical hormones, because the product is an exact match of the hormone your body produces. Currently there is no bio-identical testosterone product commercially available for women. Therefore, I work with specialized pharmacies to have the product compounded (made to order) for my patients.

The pharmacist can formulate bio-identical testosterone as a pill, cream, gel, or injection. I generally recommend a transdermal delivery (absorbed through the skin) for the following reasons. A topical cream is slowly absorbed throughout the day, keeping blood levels steady. After being absorbed into the skin, the hormone goes directly into the blood stream – little by little because of the slow skin absorption. Hormones taken orally must be absorbed through the stomach, then are carried in the bloodstream to the liver for processing. This is called “first pass metabolism” by the liver. It causes the liver to make additional proteins and metabolites that your body does not need, and some of these can have detrimental effects, such as increased susceptibility to blood clots or adverse effects on cholesterol.

How Do I Use Testosterone Cream?

Your testosterone cream will be supplied in a specialized dispenser which delivers a small measured volume of cream per dose. Rotating the bottom of the dispenser will cause the dose of cream to be delivered through a small opening at the top. Rub cream into skin behind knees once per day, then wash hands thoroughly. Why the legs? A few women have noted that testosterone cream can cause a little extra hair growth on the application site, so the leg is good location, should that happen. It is best not to use testosterone cream on the genitals (unless specifically recommended by the prescribing physician), as it will be absorbed much more readily from that site, and blood levels will rise significantly more than after application on skin of the legs.

Should I Expect any Side Effects?

Low dose testosterone supplementation is not likely to cause any side effects. However, for more sensitive women, if levels rise enough, it can lead to side effects such as irritability, nervousness, excessive sexual thoughts, acne, insomnia, strange dreams, facial hair, or thinning scalp hair. Topical testosterone does not affect blood pressure or cholesterol levels, but oral doses can (not prescribed here).

Are There Risks Associated with use of Testosterone Cream?

There is no conclusive evidence that testosterone replenishment increases cancer risk. A potential risk of long term higher doses of testosterone is developing physical signs of hyperandrogenism (too much male hormone). This could include male pattern pubic hair, coarse facial hair, deepening of the voice, and enlargement of the clitoris. This will not happen with correct usage of the low dose prescribed for you.

How Do I Know if my Dose is Correct?

We will usually obtain a baseline serum testosterone level before starting testosterone therapy. Though side effects such as facial hair are unlikely, this can sneak up on you, so I don't recommend going to quickly with dose increases. That said, if you have been using the cream for 2-3 months with no improvement in symptoms, and also you have no apparent side effects, it is fine to increase the dose until you achieve results. Typically we will check serum levels a few weeks or months after each dose adjustment, then monitor annually in most cases.

Caution! Do Not Use Testosterone if you May Become Pregnant.

Testosterone can affect the developing fetus causing virilization of females. Don't use over-the-counter DHEA supplements when using testosterone, as DHEA ultimately converts to testosterone in the body, but over-the-counter products are not adequately regulated, and you cannot be certain of the dose. Do not use more than the recommended dose of testosterone.

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