



The Dirty Word: *Testosterone*

A guide to boost testosterone levels naturally in males 40 and over.

by Marc "Spud" Bartley, RKC I

To most, the word testosterone conjures up images of high-profile athletes such as Mark McGuire, Lyle Alzado, Ben Johnson and Marion Jones. It has caught a bad rap in the media over the years as an evil, illegal substance used by only cheats and liars. Although this is a stigmatization portrayed heavily and believed by much of society, it is miles from the truth of what testosterone really is and all the amazing benefits it provides to males in pursuit of a healthy life.

Most doctors and medical professionals shy away from the subject of testosterone because their understanding is not as strong as it should be, and honestly, they fear being associated with it and the public "morality police." Many studies have documented the decline of male testosterone after the age of 30. This decrease also seems to coincide with fat/weight gain (caused by high estrogen buildup), lower activity levels, sluggishness, depression, other health issues and just an overall downhill reduction in body function and efficiency.

What is testosterone? It is an anabolic hormone created in the testes and adrenal glands of the male and in the ovaries of women. (Yes, women have testosterone, too.) Testosterone is synthesized from cholesterol, which is a lipid (fatty acid). Yes, cholesterol is good for something. From my own brief experience with statin drugs, the cholesterol-lowering effect also made me very tired and weak during training. Once I came off of them, my stamina and strength returned almost immediately. This has led me to believe these drugs attack testosterone levels and weaken the body's ability to retain and use its own muscle. I have no scientific evidence, mind you, just anecdotal; pretty much every male I know who has been on statins shares my opinion of these drugs.

What are the positive benefits of testosterone? Here is a brief list:

1. Muscle mass and strength
2. Muscle recovery and maintenance from any type of exercise—strength training and cardio
3. Bone density and strength
4. Sexual function and libido (I know drug companies make a lot of money off the "when the moment is right" commercials, but good testosterone levels will cure most of these issues)
5. Mental and physical energy levels (some studies have linked low testosterone to cognitive decline and dementia of the Alzheimer's type; eg, Moffat et al, 2005; Hogervorst et al 2005)
6. Good sleep patterns
7. Glucose control (low testosterone can lead to glucose intolerance or early diabetes)
8. Keeping estrogen levels in check (higher estrogen in males means more fat retention and less muscle maintaining. This also leads to lowered metabolism)

This is the short list of testosterone's benefits. There are a lot more that would take pages to fill. These are the most pertinent ones that contribute to having a good, healthy life.

What can you do to promote healthy testosterone levels? There are some simple lifestyle changes you can make that will increase your natural testosterone levels:

1. Eat cleaner. Believe it or not, eating cleaner (less refined and processed foods, and more whole foods) will help to boost your testosterone levels. The main idea here is to reduce all types of carbohydrates in your diet. (Please Google “carbohydrates” so you get a full understanding of every type of food that is a carbohydrate.) You will be amazed at how many carbohydrates you are consuming. When advising my clients, my main focus is to have them reduce their carbohydrate intake by half and increase their protein to compensate for the loss of calories. By making this simple change, you will lose weight and your testosterone will go up. The reason for this is that your body will not be spending its time breaking down chemicals in the processed foods in an effort to find something usable as a nutrient. If you want to take it one step further then begin to reduce your alcohol consumption. Alcohol packs a double whammy of lowering testosterone and slowing your metabolism.



2. Increase the good fats in your diet by adding essential fatty acids like omega 3, 6 and 9. Testosterone is derived from essential fatty acids. They provide the skeleton base for all hormone production in the body. If you reduce your carbohydrates and increase your protein and good fats, you will lose weight, feel better and increase your testosterone levels.

3. Workout with a moderate to heavy intensity.

If you stress your body adequately through both strength and cardio training, you will trigger a hormone release of not only testosterone but also growth hormone. This is why when you were a kid, you had what seemed like boundless energy or if you got hurt, it seemed to not take very long before you healed and

was out playing again. Increasing training intensity with all of your exercise will induce a positive shift in hormone levels.

4. Begin a plan of proper supplementation. There are two main ways to think about supplementing to elevate your testosterone: increase your natural production of testosterone and reduce the amount of estrogen in your body, which will free up your own testosterone. A little note, estrogen and testosterone are the same molecularly. If you have ever had your child play the game where you put a round peg in a round hole and a square peg in a square hole, this is essentially the idea. Testosterone and estrogen compete for the same place on a muscle cell. The estrogen will block the testosterone from landing and doing its job so the testosterone floats around with no place to go and is wasted.

Here is a list of some of the natural herbs used to raise testosterone levels:

1. Tribulus
2. Maca Root
3. Epimedium (Horny Goat Weed)
4. Mucuna Pruriene
5. Eurycoma Longifolia Jack
6. Rhodiola Rosea
7. Tongkat Ali
8. Deer Antler Velvet
9. Catuaba Bark
10. Muira Puama Root

Here is a list of natural herbs that can reduce the amount of estrogen in your body:

1. DIM (Indole 3 Carbinol)
2. Stinging Nettle Root
3. Naringenin
4. Resveratrol
5. White Button Mushroom Extract
6. Grape Seed Extract
7. Mangosteen

There are many more, but these are some of the most popular and well documented. Each one should be dosed differently. For example, I recommend a dose of 4 grams (4,000 mg) a day of Tribulus. This slightly higher dosage will make a big difference in testosterone levels vs the standard dosing of one to three capsules per day, which may equal somewhere between 1 to 2 grams. This amount will result in a modest point jump in testosterone, but the 4-gram dose per day will make a significant impact in how you feel and in your performance. Many products contain multiple boosters and estrogen blockers. Check doses carefully and do not hesitate to ask questions. You can always email me at marc@southcarolinabarbell.com.



When you begin looking at supplements, don't be surprised to see that a number of them list a proprietary blend instead of listing individual ingredients. You can't really tell how much of each ingredient is in the product. An easy way to guess at the amount is to take the number of ingredients listed in the blend and divide it by the pro-

proprietary blend amount. For example, if the blend is 500 mg with 10 ingredients listed, then 500 divided by 10 equals approximately 50 mg per ingredient.

How long should you stay on a testosterone-boosting supplement? The body adapts quickly to anything that is thrown its way, so don't expect one supplement to work

indefinitely. A good, easy rule is to use a product from four to eight weeks, tops. Usually, your body will adapt in four weeks, but sometimes you can extend it a little longer. Most supplements are set up in 30-day cycles, so you should do no more than eight weeks on any particular product. This rule applies to all supplements, not just testosterone boosters.

If you think you could benefit from an increase in natural testosterone, then try all these things out and see how you feel. If you eat better (more protein and less carbohydrates), exercise harder (moderate to hard intensity) and supplement correctly, you will feel better, sleep better, and most certainly, enjoy life better. Remember, it takes 90 days to make a habit stick.

1. Make a plan for 90 days
2. Keep the plan simple
3. Create goals and markers along the way, but easy ones

If you follow these steps and hold on for 90 days, you will be greatly surprised by what you see, and mostly importantly, how you feel.

Marc "Spud" Bartley, RKC I, is a professional powerlifter, author of The Fat Loss Diaries and The Spud Has Spoken, and owner of South Carolina Barbell and Nutrition Warehouse. For more info, contact Marc at 803-708-5788 or visit NuthouseSupplements.com. See ad page 5.

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