Testosterone has been called the “hormone of desire” for good reason. Without enough testosterone, desire for sex all but disappears. But testosterone also plays other important roles for women—especially in helping to maintain healthy body composition. Adequate levels of testosterone also help women look, feel, and perform better from day to day.

Despite the gender differences, this hormone is required in both men and women for the same reasons:
- to generate more energy and less body fat
- to increase lean body mass, especially muscle and bone
- to maintain a healthy libido
- to improve mood

No more headaches
Studies have confirmed that testosterone is the primary hormonal message behind a woman’s (and a man’s) sex drive. It is well accepted that most postmenopausal women experience a less-than-adequate sex drive, commonly referred to as female sexual dysfunction, or FSD. This condition can often be due to lowered testosterone levels—especially lower levels of “free” testosterone (the most biologically active testosterone). Most of our testosterone is bound to a special carrier protein called a sex hormone-binding globulin, or SHBG. It is only the free (or unbound) testosterone that can exert its wonders on our biochemistry.

“At least 20 percent of all testosterone prescriptions are written for women.”
Burning fat with testosterone

How frustrating it is for women that men often can control their weight more easily and even lose more weight when following the same weight loss program. But a large part of a man's metabolic advantage can be found in the extra 30 to 40 pounds of muscle his body carries. Extra muscle helps men burn up to 30 percent more calories than women—exercising or sleeping—and can be attributed to the extra testosterone a man produces.

Many doctors now prescribe testosterone treatment—along with other hormones (hormone replacement therapy, or HRT, preferably as bioidentical hormones)—for women with FSD, with great success. In fact, at least 20 percent of all testosterone prescriptions are written for women.

Swedish researchers recently published a study showing that testosterone gel given to postmenopausal women with low libido had positive effects on several aspects of sexual life such as frequency of sexual activity, orgasm, arousal, fantasies, and sexual interest.

Israeli researchers discovered that women experiencing a loss of sexual desire may not have to consume testosterone on a regular basis in order to benefit from its powerful libido-enhancing effects. The study, which appeared in the Journal of Sexual Medicine in January 2007, showed that women who used a specially prepared, sublingual testosterone gel experienced increased genital sensations and sexual lust three to four hours afterward. The researchers concluded that this may be a safer way to administer testosterone in women who suffer from chronic low libido.

Raising testosterone levels the natural way

Now that you are a little more in touch with the importance of maintaining healthy testosterone levels through age, following are a few more testosterone tips for women:

• Exercise—especially weightbearing exercise. Regular exercise has been documented to increase free testosterone and maintain lean body mass.
• Lose the fat—excess body fat may interfere with healthy testosterone levels.
• Reduce stress—stress enhances the hormone cortisol, which reduces testosterone.
• Try supplementing with a Southeast Asian herb called tongkat ali (Eurycoma longifolia). The Asian Congress of Sexology published a paper in 2002 touting the incredible aphrodisiac and testosterone-boosting powers of this amazing herb.

A healthy sex life is indicative of good health. The good news is that you now know it is possible to maintain a healthy supply of testosterone at any age.

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