For men with low testosterone, Chesapeake Urology can help restore quality of life and well-being. Learn more about treatment of low testosterone by visiting www.chesapeakeurology.com or call 877-422-8237 to schedule an appointment with a urologist.

A MAN’S GUIDE TO LOW TESTOSTERONE

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Many men experience symptoms of hypogonadism, or low testosterone, especially as they grow older. As men age, there is a natural decline in the male sex hormone testosterone circulating in the bloodstream. Low testosterone can cause a man to feel tired, lose interest in sex, experience erectile dysfunction, feel depressed or develop other health problems.

Chesapeake Urology is home to some of the region’s leading men’s sexual health specialists who are dedicated to helping you find relief from the symptoms of low testosterone. Our specialists understand that low testosterone can adversely affect your sexual health as well as your overall well-being.

“I’m always feeling tired.”

“I’ve lost interest in sex.”

“I’ve been feeling depressed lately.”

“I’ve experienced erectile dysfunction, what’s happening to me?”
What is testosterone and why is it so important?
Testosterone is the male sex hormone that plays a key role in the development of male reproductive tissues such as the testes and the prostate. During puberty, this hormone promotes secondary sexual characteristics such as increased muscles, larger bone mass and growth of body hair. In adulthood, testosterone maintains a man’s sexual desire, as well as his muscle and bone mass. In most men, the amount of testosterone in the bloodstream remains at normal levels for life. However, when testosterone levels fall below normal, it can have a negative effect on a man’s sexual health, and studies have linked Low T with medical conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

Common symptoms of low testosterone
- Decreased energy
- Decreased libido (sex drive)
- Erectile dysfunction
- Loss of muscle mass
- Decreased exercise tolerance
- Change in mental acuity or cognitive function
- Irritability or mood change and/or depression
- Mild anemia (iron deficiency)
- Osteoporosis (brittle bones)

Did you know?
Low T affects an estimated two to four million men in the United States, and the prevalence increases with age. The majority of men with Low T present with one or more symptoms including a decrease in libido, erectile dysfunction, poor energy and concentration, decreased muscle mass and increased irritability or moodiness.

What causes low testosterone?
While testosterone levels in the body can decline as a man ages, general health and medical conditions can also affect testosterone levels, including:
- Type 2 diabetes – Studies have shown that men with diabetes are more likely to develop low testosterone, and, on the flip side, some men with low testosterone are more prone to develop diabetes as they age.
- Obesity
- Sleep apnea
- Hypertension
- Damage to the testes
- Infection or testicular cancer
- Chronic pain and chronic use of pain medications

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, contact a urologist at Chesapeake Urology for a comprehensive evaluation and diagnosis, and to discuss treatment options that are right for you.

Diagnosing low testosterone
Some men experience symptoms of low testosterone that are due instead to other underlying medical conditions, which is why it’s so important to be seen by a urologist for a thorough medical evaluation and accurate diagnosis.

Your urologist will begin by taking your medical history and then performing a physical exam which will include a blood test that measures the total amount of testosterone in your bloodstream. A blood test and the results of your exam will also help your urologist identify other medical conditions that may be contributing to low testosterone such diabetes as well as other hormone deficiencies.
How is low testosterone treated?

If low testosterone has been diagnosed based on your symptoms and results of your blood test, your urologist will discuss Testosterone replacement therapy (TRT).

Treatment with testosterone replacement therapy may:

- Increase energy
- Increase sex drive
- Alleviate erectile dysfunction (ED)
- Increase muscle mass and improve overall bone density
- Improve depression and fatigue

Testosterone replacement therapy (TRT) increases the amount of the hormone in your bloodstream and is administered in one of several ways:

- **Testosterone skin patch** – A patch containing the hormone is applied either to the scrotum or the body and delivers a consistent level of testosterone for 24 hours. The patch is changed daily.
  
  **Side effects:**
  - The patch may cause skin irritation at the site of application.

- **Testosterone gel** – The gel is applied daily to either the shoulders, upper arms, thighs, underarm or intranasal area and provides a consistent dose of testosterone over a period of 24 hours.
  
  **Side effects:**
  - Transfer of the gel to other people through physical contact is possible and could pose a risk. Contact with children and women (especially pregnant women) should be avoided.

- **Intramuscular injection** – A short-acting dose of testosterone is injected every one to two weeks. A long acting dose of the hormone requires injection every 10 weeks.
  
  **Side effects:**
  - Intramuscular injections produce fluctuation in hormone concentrations, which may also cause a swing in symptoms.
Other treatment options

- **Insertion of sub-dermal testosterone pellets** – Small pellets containing the hormone testosterone are inserted beneath the skin, providing a slow-release of testosterone into the body over time. This is performed in a 10-minute office procedure under local anesthesia every four to six months.

**Side effects:**
- Localized pain and/or bleeding at insertion site
- Infection (although not common)

**General health and medical disorders can affect testosterone levels including obesity, diabetes, sleep apnea, hypertension, chronic pain, and chronic use of pain medications. In fact, one study found low testosterone levels in 33 percent of male diabetics.**

Although not common, other side effects of hormone replacement therapy may include:

- Stimulation of prostate tissue growth, which can lead to urinary symptoms
- Breast enlargement
- Decreased testicle size
- Fluid retention
- Decreased sperm production
- Increased Red Blood Cells (Polycythemia) which may predispose to clotting issues
- Possible increased risk of heart attacks and strokes

**Is testosterone replacement therapy right for me?**

In general, hormone replacement therapy is safe under the supervision of a physician. Because testosterone replacement therapy may stimulate prostate growth, men who have been diagnosed with prostate cancer or are at increased risk of developing prostate cancer, should be thoroughly evaluated by a urologist to determine whether TRT is recommended. Before beginning TRT, your urologist may perform a prostate exam and give you a PSA test to ensure you are not at risk for prostate cancer.

Every man reacts differently to testosterone replacement therapy, and symptom management and improvement varies. Your urologist will work with you to monitor the benefits versus the side effects and risks of TRT to ensure your overall good health.
On January 31, 2014, the FDA issued the following statement regarding testosterone replacement therapy:

The FDA has concluded that there is a possible increased cardiovascular risk associated with testosterone use. These studies included aging men treated with testosterone. Some studies reported an increased risk of heart attack, stroke, or death associated with testosterone treatment, while others did not.

Based on our findings, we are requiring labeling changes for all prescription testosterone products to reflect the possible increased risk of heart attacks and strokes associated with testosterone use. Health care professionals should make patients aware of this possible risk when deciding whether to start or continue a patient on testosterone therapy. We are also requiring manufacturers of approved testosterone products to conduct a well-designed clinical trial to more clearly address the question of whether an increased risk of heart attack or stroke exists among users of these products. We are encouraging these manufacturers to work together on a clinical trial, but they are allowed to work separately if they so choose.

Patients using testosterone should seek medical attention immediately if symptoms of a heart attack or stroke are present, such as:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Weakness in one part or one side of the body
- Slurred speech