

A new study has found a “substantial” drop in U.S. men’s testosterone levels since the 1980s, but the reasons for the decline remain unclear [1]. This trend also does not appear to be related to age.

The average levels of the male hormone dropped by 1 percent a year, Dr. Thomas Travison and colleagues from the New England Research Institutes in Watertown, Massachusetts, found.

“The entire population is shifting somewhat downward we think,” says Travison. “We’re counting on other studies to confirm this.”

Travison and his team analyzed data from the Massachusetts Male Aging Study, a long-term investigation of aging in about 1,700 Boston-area men. Data from the men were collected for three time intervals: 1987-1989, 1995-1997, and 2002-2004.

While a man’s testosterone level will fall steadily as he ages, the researchers observed a speedier decline in average testosterone levels than would have been expected with aging alone.

They hypothesized that the rising prevalence of obesity as well as the sharp decline in cigarette smoking might help explain their findings, given that testosterone levels are lower among overweight people and smoking increases testosterone levels. But these factors accounted for only a small percentage of the observed difference.

It’s likely that some sort of environmental exposure is responsible for the testosterone decline, Travison said, although he said attempting to explain what this might be based on the current findings would be “pure conjecture.”

1. Keep body fat levels low (i.e. under 15%)

One of the best ways to keep your testosterone levels at the high end of normal is to keep your body fat under control. Overweight men typically have lower testosterone levels than

normal-weight men. However, while too much body fat lowers testosterone, the same thing happens when your body fat levels get too low. In a group of 19 male wrestlers (who often need to lose a lot of weight very quickly to make weight for a competition), low testosterone levels were linked with a low body fat percentage. Men should aim for a body fat percentage of 10-15%.

2. Eat sufficient protein and fat

Studies show a strong link between dietary fat and testosterone levels. Research published in the Journal of Applied Physiology by a team of Penn State University researchers shows that dietary fat was linked to higher testosterone levels [4]. Likewise, diets that are too low in protein are also linked to a drop in testosterone. A protein intake of roughly 1 gram of protein per pound of bodyweight should be sufficient to keep testosterone levels at the high end of normal. So, a man weighing 180 pounds would aim for roughly 180 grams of protein daily.

3. Do weight training, heavy weights

Long-term studies show that more than three hours of exercise each week can boost testosterone levels. However, not all forms of exercise boost testosterone to the same extent. Firstly, it needs to be vigorous, as light to moderate exercise (such as walking) has little effect on testosterone levels. Studies show that multi-joint exercises such as the squat, bench press, seated row and lat pulldown done with a heavy weight (5-8 repetitions) will also elevate testosterone.

4. Get enough sleep

One of the best things you can do to raise your testosterone is to get enough sleep - poor sleep quality can slash your testosterone levels by over 30%. Aim for at least 7-8 hours of sleep per night.

5. [ZMA](#)

[ZMA](#) is a blend of Zinc, Magnesium and vitamin B6. Research shows that this blend of nutrients will raise low testosterone levels, increase strength, and accelerate gains in muscle size. In one study, conducted at Western Washington University, two groups of American Footballers took part in an 8-week training programme [3]. One group was given [ZMA](#), while the second group used a 'dummy supplement.

[ZMA](#) supplementation led to a 33.5% increase in testosterone. In contrast, testosterone levels actually dropped in the control group.

6. Tribulus

Tribulus terrestris (also known as puncture vine) is a plant that grows in many tropical and moderate areas of the world. Reported to be the “secret weapon” employed by Bulgarian strength athletes, Tribulus terrestris is reported to increase muscle growth, improve libido and “lift” male performance in the bedroom. Many different cultures have used it for a number of conditions. The Greeks, for example, used Tribulus terrestris as a mood-enhancer. The people of Bulgaria used Tribulus terrestris as a way to enhance sex and as a treatment for infertility. Recently, eastern European athletes have used it in place of certain anabolic drugs to gain strength and size.

7. Fenutest

Fenutest is a fenugreek extract standardised for Fenuside, a saponin that’s found in Fenugreek. Fenutest works by stimulating the hypothalamus to produce corticotropin releasing hormone (CRH), which then acts on the pituitary gland, leading to an increase in the production of adrenocorticotrophin hormone (ACTH). ACTH then acts on the adrenal cortex to raise androgen levels, which are then converted into testosterone. Not only does Fenutest appear to increase the natural production of testosterone, it also has a “testosterone-like” structure. Studies suggest that it can activate the androgen receptor itself and produce testosterone-like effects.

Research

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