



**Men'sHealth**

# **WHAT TO DO ABOUT YOUR TESTOSTERONE**

**Testosterone does so much for your body, from helping you build muscle to keeping your bones healthy to producing red blood cells to maintaining erections. So, of course, you want to make sure your levels stay in the normal range.**

# WHAT TO DO ABOUT YOUR TESTOSTERONE

**A** **PLETHORA OF** companies are now offering to test your testosterone to see if it's low. And myths about this mighty hormone might have you thinking that even if yours is in the healthy range, you should be doing something about it so that you have more.

That's not necessarily so. More testosterone isn't always better. Too much can cause a number of health problems. Too little testosterone also brings a range of symptoms, like fatigue, low libido, and depression, and it can compromise muscle and bone density.

So do you really need to do something about your testosterone? This 4-Week Plan helps you get to the truths about whether your T is low, what affects your T levels, how and when to get them checked, and what testosterone therapy involves. Each week, you'll focus on three key things that are essential to discover about testosterone.

**Week-by-week, here's how to  
GET CLOSER TO MASTERING  
YOUR TESTOSTERONE.**



# WEEK 1

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## Figure Out If You're Low

As you get older, it's natural to see a decline in testosterone—it will drop about 1 percent a year after you reach age 40. So it's important to understand a bit more about what it feels like to have low T. Then, you'll know whether you need to seek treatment.

### 1. Get to Know What T Is—and Isn't

Testosterone is a crucial sex hormone for people assigned male at birth, and it's mostly produced by the testes. Testosterone is responsible for many of the bodily functions that you associate with being male—think: facial and body hair growth, muscle building, and sperm production. But it's also necessary for red blood cell development, bone density, and sex drive.

There's a myth that more testosterone translates to greater manliness. But, taking testosterone when you don't need it can cause numerous side effects, like reduced sperm counts. Get to know all about T [here](#).

### 2. Understand What a Healthy T Level Is

“Normal” is relative when it comes to testosterone. [T levels vary](#) from person to person, based on factors like age, weight, and general health. It also fluctuates throughout the day. You'll see your highest levels in the morning, and then it drops as the day progresses.

To really put a number on it, healthy testosterone levels are typically between 264 and 916 ng/dL. Top testosterone researchers insist that there's nothing better about having a testosterone level of 550, for instance, than there is about having a level of 400. To be treated for low testosterone, most doctors focus more on how you're feeling—whether you're experiencing the symptoms of low testosterone—than the exact number on your labs.

### 3. Know the Signs of Low T

Testosterone deficiency is a medical condition that can happen at any age. Several factors can [cause your T levels to drop](#), including getting older, gaining weight, not getting enough sleep, and having a chronic medical condition, pituitary disorder, or testicular problem.

When your testosterone is low, you'll likely feel it. Some of the biggest signs of low T include:

- LOW LIBIDO
- ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION
- DECLINED MUSCLE MASS
- SHRINKING PENIS SIZE
- DECREASED ENERGY LEVELS

# WEEK 2

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## Maintain Your T Naturally

Maintaining healthy testosterone levels can help you maintain optimal health. Sometimes, declining T levels are outside your control. But, there are some factors that you can control, which can [naturally keep your levels from getting too low](#). Here's what to focus on this week:

### 1. Get Plenty of Sleep

Optimal T levels depend on getting at least seven hours of sleep a night. [Testosterone increases while you sleep](#) and is tied to your circadian rhythm. If you maintain traditional sleep patterns, you'll see your testosterone levels peak between 3 a.m. and 8 a.m. Research shows that people who work night shifts or generally don't get enough sleep are more likely to have testosterone deficiency.

Lack of sleep itself might not be the only thing causing low T, though. Sleep deprivation can make other health conditions worse, and those can affect your T. It can, of course, cause your energy levels to tank, which might make you feel as if you have low T. ([Here's](#) how to know if you're getting a healthy enough amount of sleep.) Keep a regular sleep schedule, avoid alcohol and caffeine before bedtime, and exercise regularly to get the rest you need.

### 2. Exercise Regularly

You already know that a regular exercise routine does wonders for all aspects of your health. [Exercise also affects your testosterone](#) levels, but exactly how depends on the types of workouts you do, how intense they are, and how long you're exercising.

Strength exercises and high-intensity interval training (HIIT) have been shown to increase testosterone, but the boost usually only lasts about an hour. Endurance-based exercises, such as cardio, can possibly lower your T. But the bottom line is this: any kind of exercise helps you maintain a healthy weight and improves your cardiovascular health, which is good for your T levels.

### 3. Build Healthy Relationships

There's not a direct link between the quality of your [relationships and your testosterone levels](#). But evidence suggests that elements of being in a relationship, like emotional connections, cuddling, and even arguing, can affect T levels.

Building and maintaining healthy relationships is good for your overall well-being, and that will help you keep normal T levels. On the flip side, when your testosterone is low, you may experience fatigue, a depressed mood, and low libido, which might cause relationship problems.

# WEEK 3

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## Get a Good Test

The main reason to get your testosterone levels tested is if you're experiencing signs of low T, like fatigue, depression, or low sex drive. The influencer trend toward getting a baseline testosterone level test is a bit of a hot button among experts right now. If you don't have any symptoms, many doctors say [there's really no need to get a test](#). But if you're curious and have the money, or if you need a test because you're experiencing symptoms, there are several options.

### 1. Make a Doctor's Appointment

Start with your primary care physician; they may do a [testosterone test](#), or may refer you to a urologist or endocrinologist for one. A blood test is the best way to check the details of your levels.

You'll actually need two blood tests performed in the morning, usually before 10 a.m., when your T is at its highest levels. If your levels are low, below 264 or 300 ng/dL, and you have symptoms of low T, your doctor may recommend lifestyle changes or may point you to hormone therapy.

### 2. Try an At-Home Test

Another option is an at-home test, which can give you a starting point to learn more about your T levels. Keep in mind, though, that they're not as reliable as the tests done by your health provider—results may vary depending on how well you collected your sample. If you want to give it a try, here's a list of [at-home testosterone test kits](#) recommended by doctors.

To get the best result with an at-home test, don't eat or drink anything after 8 p.m. the night before testing and do your test between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. The test involves a finger stick and squeezing a small amount of blood into the testing materials. (Check out one man's experience [taking an at-home test](#).) You then ship it off and get your results a few days later. Some testing companies let you schedule a call with a clinician to talk about your results; some companies also offer treatments if you're low.

### 3. Take a Combo Approach

Starting with an at-home test might be more convenient for you. But if your results show you have low T, consider bringing them to your doctor to discuss treatment options. Your doctor might want to retest to confirm that your T is low and discuss your symptoms. Doctors also regularly check your levels after you've been on T therapy to ensure they stay at a normal level for you.

# WEEK 4

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## What to Do If You Need Testosterone

Doctors generally only prescribe testosterone replacement therapy when tests confirm that your levels are low (below 264 or 300 ng/dL) and you're having low-T symptoms. Some testosterone treatments may be easy to get online without working with a doctor (not what you want). Other online clinics—and IRL docs, of course—offer contact with a doctor to get and monitor treatment.

### 1. Decide What Treatment Works for You

There are several [types of testosterone therapy](#), including topical gels, injectibles, patches, under-the-skin pellet therapy, pills, and nasal sprays. Each one has its own pros and cons. What's right for you depends on your personal preference, your specific health circumstances, and what your insurance covers.

You can also try an online service that delivers testosterone therapy right to your door. These services include blood testing to check your T levels, clinical consultations, and the actual therapy. They're not all the same. [Here's what to know](#) if you're going the online clinic route.

### 2. Understand the Side Effects

Testosterone therapy helps raise your levels and can ease many of your low-T symptoms. But it can bring some [side effects](#). The biggest one is infertility—T therapy can decrease sperm production and increase your risk for infertility.

Other side effects might include worsening sleep apnea, acne, an increased risk for blood clots, and enlarged breasts. It was previously thought that testosterone replacement therapy could raise your risk for a heart attack, stroke, and prostate cancer, but new evidence is starting to discredit these claims.

### 3. Get Your Levels Rechecked

Working with your doctor on testosterone replacement therapy will ensure you're taking the right amount—and that you truly need it. Obtaining therapies on your own might result in taking too much, which brings its own set of problems.

Once you start T therapy, your doctor will [recheck your levels](#) after about four to six weeks to make sure your testosterone levels are responding as they should. Then, they'll recheck everything every six months to make sure you're not having any side effects and that your levels remain in a normal range.