

THE WEEK

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SMART *life*

LIVE HEALTHY, STAY FIT

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Testing times

Low testosterone levels are no longer a problem of the ageing population alone. Even young men are troubled by hormonal fluctuations

BY RUTH SQUITA PRABHU



Hormonal issues are often believed to be faced only by women. Hormone imbalance, however, can lead to physical and emotional problems in men, too. If earlier only men above 50 had to worry about low testosterone levels, today even young men experience symptoms of male hormone deficiency.

Men can suffer from deficiency of androgens (male sex hormones) like testosterone and DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone), says Dr Deepak Chaturvedi of Diabetes, Thyroid & Hormone Clinic, Mumbai. "The usual slow decline of testosterone and DHEA can happen with ageing, but it's not as marked and sharp as the decline of oestrogen and progesterone in women [menopause]," says Chaturvedi. "This decline of testosterone can be arbitrarily referred to as andropause. Current medical literature uses the term 'Partial Androgen Deficiency in Adult Male' (PADAM). In a world of social jet lag and undue stress, there is no age at which PADAM cannot occur. While the usual age is 50 years, it is now seen to occur at any age."

Chaturvedi recalls the case of a 38-year-old man, who was diagnosed with low levels of testosterone. "It was his 35-year-old wife who came complaining of headaches and feeling low, for a routine examination," says Chaturvedi. "On taking a detailed his-

tory, including sexual history, it was found that the husband was a frequent traveller and the number of sexual encounters were few. The husband was requested to come to the clinic and a detailed history showed that he was diabetic, on controlled medication, overweight and borderline hypertensive. The husband mentioned that he had no libido and also suffered from erectile dysfunction. Lab evaluations were ordered for both and while the wife had only a mild vitamin deficiency, the husband was found to have low testosterone, low DHT (5 alpha-dihydrotestosterone), high prolactin, low DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone), low vitamin B12 and D."

Doctors believe there are many cases where hormonal deficiencies lead to problems in a relationship. But the deficiencies can be easily addressed. As in this case, the husband was prescribed Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) which comprised testosterone, DHEA, vitamins B12 and D, along with a few other treatment options. The follow-up involved resolving the wife's issues and also focusing on weight loss. Their condition improved significantly in a couple of months.



When to visit a doctor

If you are consistently suffering from

- › Fatigue
- › Lethargy
- › Sexual dysfunction
- › Loss of body hair
- › Low libido
- › Ambitendency (contradictory responses to various situations)
- › Non-decisiveness
- › Behaviour change
- › Sleep disturbances
- › Night sweats
- › Loss of memory
- › Loss of concentration and attention
- › Belly fat gain
- › Loss of muscle mass
- › Difficulty in building body muscles
- › Gynecomastia (enlarged breasts in men)
- › Osteoporosis
- › Aches and pains
- › Irritability
- › Mood issues (mainly anxiety and depression)

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