

LOW TESTOSTERONE (Low T)

What it means for you

Testosterone (T) is a type of hormone – a chemical substance that acts like a messenger in the body. Most T is made by the testicles. It is needed for:

- Normal sexual development and function in men
- Development of facial hair and deeper voice in growing boys
- Muscle strength
- Production of sperm

What causes low T?

T naturally lowers as you age – about 1% each year starting in your late 30s or 40s.

Lower T can also be caused by:

- Being overweight
- Using certain drugs such as narcotics or antidepressants
- Diseases such as diabetes or problems with the pituitary gland (the “master” gland that controls several other hormone glands like the testicles)
- Infections
- Cancer treatments



What are the symptoms of low T?



Some symptoms are more strongly related to low T: lower sex drive, erection problems, painful or swollen breasts in men, loss of height, low bone mineral density (the strength in your bones), hot flushes and sweats.

More general symptoms may or may not be the result of low T: severe tiredness, poor memory, sleep problems, lower muscle strength, increased body fat and mild anemia (too few healthy red blood cells in your blood).

How do I know I have low T?

If your doctor finds you have some of the symptoms suggesting low T, he/she may order a test that measures the total amount of T in your blood. It should be done in the morning between 7 and 11am or within three hours of waking up if you do shift work.

If your test shows a low T, your doctor may order a repeat test and sometimes other blood tests to help pinpoint the cause of your low T.

How is low T treated?

In Canada, treatments include gels, patches, injections or pills taken by mouth. Your doctor can help you decide if – and which – treatment is right for you.

Sources: 1) Grober ED. Testosterone deficiency and testosterone replacement therapy. The consumer’s handbook of urological health. www.cua.org;
2) Testosterone Therapy: A patient guide. 2018. www.urologyhealth.org

