

# Testosterone!

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By Dr. Derek Conte

“Do YOU have Low-T?” You hear it everywhere now on TV and the radio. You’ve seen the commercials with the 40-plus man, a slight pouch above his beltline, looking enviously at the “other guy”, tuxedoed and handsome with a full shock of movie star hair making off in a Jaguar with a slinky brunette.

Testosterone is being sold as the latest miracle drug. Well, testosterone *is* a miracle molecule made by Mother Nature and its effects are powerful, physically and psychologically. But is it a good idea to take testosterone as a hormone replacement drug when levels taper off naturally during our ‘post-prime’ years?

Testosterone is what is known as a steroid hormone whose action is gradual and typically very long lasting (compared to another hormone, Adrenaline (Epinephrine), an amine-type hormone whose effects are instantaneous and short-acting and is used in inhalers for asthmatics to quickly open up the airway). Testosterone is produced in the testes and is responsible for building muscle strength and bone density from birth. During pubescence, it causes growth of the reproductive organs and of the hair in the armpits, genitals, face, legs and chest. Testosterone also signals growth of glands that emit a distinctive odor, the appearance of the Adam’s apple, deepening of the voice and sperm production.

Psycho-Behaviorally, testosterone is related to the “masculinization of the brain”; the rise of the libido (sex drive), aggression, criminality, competitive mindset, athletic ability, anti-social behavior, alcoholism and even selfish behavior as suggested by this small study:

*From Wikipedia: [Testosterone levels play a major role in risk-taking during financial decisions.](#)<sup>[62][63]</sup> A 2009 study of 25 male subjects found that men with artificially raised testosterone were 27% less generous while playing a test game than they were at their normal testosterone level. The authors concluded that "What we have found is that T[estosterone] appears to play a role inducing men to change from being selfless to being selfish."<sup>[64]</sup>*

Normally, testosterone is given to offset hypogonadism, a condition of low testosterone production, “male menopause”, or in the case of female-to-male trans-sexual surgeries. But now, it is more common for men without any medical disorder to take testosterone for a renewed sense of vitality. There are side effects like low sperm count due to a phenomenon called ‘down-regulation’, acne, sleep apnea, prostate enlargement and thickening of the blood that can promote stroke and heart attack. Medical testosterone is cholesterol-based and therefore can pass through the skin easily so it is taken in patch or gel form and rubbed under the arms, though it can be administered by pill or injection.

Due to the short time testosterone has been in vogue the long-term effects are still not appreciated, yet advertizing has increased in the last ten years exponentially and sales are tracking with that investment. Some men are shouting from the hilltops with joy, but please don’t rush to get the big “T” so that you can become the next James Bond. Do your research.

*Dr. Derek Conte is co-founder of Chiropractic Specialists at 1154 Concord Rd. in Smyrna. For information call 404-784-6008 and see my website: [drderekconte.com](http://drderekconte.com) and Facebook: **Chiropractor Smyrna Ga | Derek Conte Dc***

