



me & wonder woman part sex [m.hrabovsky](#) Creative Commons

Women's Secret Sex Hormone: 6 Things You Must Know

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Somewhere around the time I turned 50, my sex life took a turn for the worse. My wife and I had always enjoyed each other, but now things seemed out of balance. It was like being an adolescent again. I didn't feel at home in my body, mind, or spirit. When we would kiss, our noses would get in the way. We both seemed awkward around each other. Worst of all, I was having what would euphemistically be called "erectile dysfunction." I was terrified. This was before Viagra had come on the scene. My doctor suggested I have my testosterone levels checked.

Long story, short, I did get checked. My T levels were low and the doctor recommended some supplements to raise my levels. But once I was back on track and raring to go, my wife was having problems. She didn't get as aroused as easily as she once did. Neither of us knew what was causing the problem. And it never occurred to us that it could be *her* testosterone that was the issue. Until we read a little book by Susan Rako, M.D., we were frustrated and confused.

The Hormone of Desire: The Truth About Testosterone, Sexuality, and Menopause

Susan Rako, M.D., was forty-seven, still having periods, albeit irregularly, as she describes it, when her world began to change. "I could not make sense of the significant loss in general vital energy, thinning and loss of public hair, and loss of sexual energy I experienced," she remembers. "To say that I was lacking a feeling of well-being would be an understatement."

Dr. Rako's search led to a surprising finding. "The data was there," she says, "But it didn't say estrogen was what I needed. It said testosterone." She

reported the results of her personal quest and the startling findings that have implications for both men and women going through the menopause passage in her book, *The Hormone of Desire: The Truth About Sexuality, Menopause, and Testosterone*.

She discusses three significant findings from her research:

1. A woman's normal physiology includes the production of a critical amount of testosterone, essential to her normal sexual development, to the healthy functioning of virtually all tissues in her body, and to her experience of vital energy and sexual libido.
2. This critical amount of testosterone decreases after menopause, in many women resulting in a loss of vital energy and sexual libido.
3. Supplementary testosterone can be a substantial help in restoring a woman to her familiar level of energy, libido, and well-being.

Testosterone: The Many Gendered Hormone

Testosterone is a hormone with quite a personality. Tainted by a history of abuse by bodybuilders and athletes, testosterone is often pointed to as the cause of aggression, bulging pectorals, an insatiable sexual appetite and the almighty hairy chest. Its reputation has been somewhat two-faced. Since the 1940's, the illegal use of testosterone and its relatives, anabolic steroids, to increase muscle mass and enhance sports performance has fuelled a blackmarket worth millions. On the other hand, its fruits of virility and strength have been well-accepted in more mainstream clinical therapies.

As the primary male sex hormone produced by the testicles, testosterone tends to be identified with all we stereotype as masculine. It's a lot to ask from a simple chemical arrangement of carbon rings, a derivative of the molecule cholesterol. Is it more than a humble hormone can bear?...

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How much of our behavior is controlled by the biology of our hormones? Does testosterone really make the man? It's a debate that's been waged in scientific and social circles for decades. Some have attributed high levels of testosterone to criminal tendencies whilst others call it the hormone of desire.

Amidst the excitement, what's emerging is that it's difficult to box our hormones so succinctly according to gender. Despite popular belief, testosterone is a many-gendered hormone. It belongs in the hormonal kitbags of both men and women, and can play a role in the well-being of us all...male, female...or anywhere in between. Nevertheless testosterone should perhaps be best known as the "value-laden hormone", caught in a confusing web of social expectations and gender stereotypes.

Women and Testosterone: Sexual Secrets You Wish You Knew

[Professor James Dabbs](#) of Georgia State University leads research into the relationship between testosterone and human social behavior. To do this, Dabbs says "we need to know what happens in natural settings outside the laboratory... We have gathered data in settings ranging from bedrooms to barrooms, among subjects who include children, adults, unemployed day laborers, lawyers, prisoners, politicians and two chimpanzees." He's ventured into fire departments, construction sites, colleges, strip clubs and sports arenas.

Over the past decade Dabbs and his colleagues have found testosterone levels to influence a person's tendency towards criminal violence, delinquency, suicide, heroic altruism and aggression, as well as their cognition, sexuality and sex roles, occupation, personality, emotions, competitiveness, childhood behavior, facial expressions, disturbed relationships and more. It's an extraordinary body of work with powerful implications. It's important for women, as well as for men.

Dabbs describes one of his research subjects, Sylvia, as having a "high-testosterone approach to life." He tell us that she is a showperson and entrepreneur, and she deals with problems directly and flamboyantly. Dabbs measured her testosterone level and found her results quite interesting. "I marked her score on a graph along with the scores of a group of college women and group of violent women from the local counterculture," Dabbs said. "Sylvia was higher in testosterone than the college students and right in the middle of the violent group."

Here's what you should know about testosterone and women:

1. Women who have more testosterone act more like typical males.

In the 1950s and 1960s physicians prescribed diethylstilberstrol, or DES, to prevent miscarriages. In *utero* it has testosterone-like effects. According to research results reported by Dabbs, "The daughters of women who took DES were more masculine than other girls. They played with boys' toys and engaged in more rough-and-tumble 'tomboyish' play. My wife's cousin took DES when she was pregnant, and she had a hyperactive, hard-to-handle baby girl, who grew up to be a super-salesperson in the cellular phone business."

2. Our levels of testosterone are generally determined at birth.

Whether you are a high, medium, or low T man or woman is determined primarily by your genes. We are born with a certain range that remains with us throughout our lives.

3. Testosterone is a social sex hormone.

The major social effect of testosterone is to orient us, whether male or female, towards sex and power. Women who have more testosterone are more oriented towards sexuality and the pull of power and competition.

Women with high levels of testosterone seek many sexual partners. Studies with college students showed that both high T males and high T females had many more sexual partners than those who were average or low T people.

4. Lesbians *do not* have higher testosterone levels than heterosexual women.

“There is no difference in testosterone levels between lesbians and heterosexual women,” says Dabbs. “However, those who identify themselves as ‘butch’ tend to have higher levels than those who identify themselves as ‘femme’.”

5. Testosterone levels go up for some when we’re single and down when we marry.

“Perhaps like birds, some people have chronic high levels of testosterone, and others have high levels only when they are pursuing mates,” says Dabbs.

6. Testosterone levels can be influenced by our social situation.

“Our average testosterone level is inherited from our parents,” says Dabbs, “but physical and social conditions produce changes around this average level. “Testosterone falls with ill health and physical exhaustion. It rises when we win important contests and falls when we lose.”

For more on testosterone, I recommend [*Heroes, Rogues, and Lovers: Testosterone and Behavior*](#) by James McBride Dabbs with Mary Godwin Dabbs.

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