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with Leah McClellan Your Guide to One of Over 700 Sites



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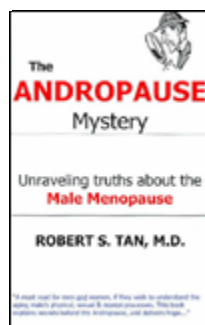
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The Andropause Mystery An Interview

With Robert S. Tan, M.D.

Part 2: Signs And Symptoms



Leah McClellan: What are some of the symptoms and signs of andropause? At what age do symptoms typically appear?

Dr. Tan: These can be some of the symptoms and signs, but they must be correlated with the blood testosterone level.

1. Loss of hair in the axilla (armpits)
2. Testicles become smaller in size
3. Decreased libido or low sex drive
4. Erectile dysfunction or impotence
5. Lethargy or tiredness
6. Depression
7. Decreased muscle strength
8. Oligospermia or low sperm count
9. Decreased bone density
10. Forgetfulness

In my research, I find that most men report symptoms between the ages of 51-60 years. The next most common group was between the ages of 61-70. Rarely, I do find clinical hypogonadism in men in their forties, but they often suffer from other illnesses like diabetes and high blood pressure. I refer to the time beyond the andropause as the post-andropausal period.

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Leah McClellan: Is sexual/erectile dysfunction a symptom of andropause? What can be done?

Dr. Tan: Yes, it is part of the andropause syndrome. If it is a question of sexual drive, testosterone can help. However, many men suffer from vascular cause of erectile dysfunction, and drugs such as Viagra can help. There are other drugs available that can be injected into the penis or inserted into the urethra and also mechanical devices. In addition, there are some interesting new drugs in the horizon, including Uprima and Vasomax. I cannot go into detail here, but there is a chapter dedicated to this in my book. Keep in mind, though, drugs like some high blood pressure medications may also cause erectile dysfunction. It is best to discuss with your personal physician the various causes as it may sometimes get complex.

Leah McClellan: What are some of the differences between the female menopause and the andropause?

Dr. Tan: Unlike women, men do not experience a discrete physiological event such as the termination of the menses. Having said that, my study reveals that men feel the failure to have an erection is the equivalent of the end of menses. This is interesting as both events signal the end of a reproductive life. Overall, the symptoms of andropause are more spread out over a longer period, in contradistinction to the menopause, which occurs generally over several months or at most a year.

Research has shown that there is a biochemical basis to this difference of timing. The cessation of the menses in women is associated with a dramatic decline in estrogen levels. Lowering of the estrogen levels leads to a compensatory rise of two hormones: Follicular Stimulating Hormone (FSH) and Luteinizing Hormone (LH). This is an attempt by the pituitary gland in the brain to give the ovaries the last chance to produce more estrogens. FSH and LH are what we call regulatory hormones. This phenomenon is often described as the pituitary feedback system. In aging men, the decline of testosterone level also leads to rises in the FSH and LH levels. The resultant high levels of FSH and LH act on the testes and the adrenals in an attempt to produce more testosterone. However, in men the rise in FSH and LH levels is much less dramatic compared to women, as if there is some "protective effect." Why this is so, and why the andropause is of a much more gradual onset is unclear. However, the decline is not exclusive to androgens alone, as other hormones such as Growth Hormone also diminish with age.

Leah McClellan: Do all men experience the andropause?

Dr. Tan: Eventually all men will if they live long enough but, similar to women, not all men feel the "effects" of andropause. Not all women complain of hot flashes, irritability and mood swings during the menopause. In the

same way, not all men will complain of hot flashes, irritability and mood swings. However, almost all women face increased bone and muscle loss, cognitive decline, higher cardiac risks, and dry skin in the post menopausal period. Men, as they age and enter andropause, will also experience the effects of low androgens. Distinctively, low androgens over time in the post-andropausal period will also lead to bone and muscle loss as well as cognitive changes.

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