Testosterone Isn’t Just for Men: Why This Hormone Is Essential for Women’s Health Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Hormone Heroines Intro

Everybody's always thought of testosterone as the guy hormone. Technically we make more, our ovaries and our adrenals make more testosterone than they do estrogen.

It is not just for men. A lot of like what makes men men comes from testosterone. We have more testosterone than we have estradiol and look what estradiol does.

us. Everybody knows that it's good for libido, right? It's good for male's libido. It's good for our libido. That's not the only thing it does. It has a lot to do with energy and mood.

It really helps you maintain that muscle and then it also helps you maintain bone because we have receptors in our bones. Testosterone, estrogen, progesterone for women are huge factors in maintaining longevity.

Do you feel like your hormones have turned against you? Trust us, you're not alone. We're Dr. Serena and Dr. Heidi, and on Hormone Heroines, we explore all the root causes that are behind hormone imbalances, and we teach you how to thrive through them.

Join us for real talk, expert tips, and even a few laughs.

Testosterone as a Key Female Hormone

Hello, and welcome back to Hormone Heroines. Today, we are going to be talking about women's number one sex hormone, and it's probably not what you think it is.

It is actually testosterone. Yes, we do make more testosterone than estrogen. So we are going to talk to you about why it's good for you, why we need it, all of the things.

So everybody's always thought of testosterone as the guy hormone. Well, it is. Yes, guys have it. And they do have more than us. But technically, we make more.

Our ovaries and our adrenals make more testosterone than they do estrogen. So it is our number one sex hormone also. And we still need it as well. It is not just for men.

On that note though I do feel like it's crazy to think about how powerful estradiol is considering that men make so much testosterone which causes like all their masculinizing features and a lot of like what makes men men comes from testosterone but we have more testosterone than we have estradiol and look what estradiol does to us.

Yeah. Pretty crazy. It's a lot stronger. Yes, it's very strong. Yes. Very powerful hormone. Anyways, back to testosterone. Just like us. No. Okay. So it does a lot of things in the body.

We have receptors for it all over our body and all the cells. So everybody knows that it's good for libido, right? Like it's good for male's libido, it's good for our libido.

That's not the only thing it does though. It has a lot to do with energy and mood. Depression is a huge thing when you don't have enough. Yeah. Kind of like that malaise kind of feeling where you're not necessarily in a hole.

It plays a huge role in motivation. Yeah. It gives you that extra courage to go out and do things. Yes, like a bravery hormone. Yeah, it's kind of like a bravery hormone.

It just makes you more willing to take that chance to do things. Yeah, so it has a huge impact on mood and how willing you are to take a risk.

Energy, Mood, and Motivation

Yeah. So yeah, I mean, and energy especially too. Like if you're, if you are, especially in midlife, so I'm in perimenopause, so I'm struggling with all the hormones going wacko.

You know, I really felt a difference when I started my testosterone therapy because I had my estradiol and my progesterone all keyed in and everything was good.

And I was still having a little bit of malaise, not horrible, but just kind of like, I just wanted to stay at home and watch movies all day and not That lack of motivation.

Yes, the lack of motivation. I didn't want to go work out because I just felt weak and I didn't want to really do much at all because I just had no energy.

Getting my estradiol and my progesterone at the right levels definitely helped, but until I added the testosterone, I really didn't hit that good feeling of where I felt like myself again.

Yeah. Well, and then I think, you know, for you, you definitely fall into that category of people who, if you're not working out, you're not happy. Yes.

Yes. My family says that's how I get my crazies out. And it really is because I like to lift heavy and it just takes my, it helps my brain to stop for a minute.

But without testosterone, it's really hard to build muscle and it's really hard to actually get motivated to get in the gym. Well, especially, you know, like it's hard to be motivated to go to the gym and work out if you know you're not going to get anything out of it.

You know, like you feel weak at the gym. Do you really still want to go like? I feel better. Like leg day is my favorite day and it's my favorite day because I am the strongest in my legs.

So like I can do the highest weights. I can always, you know, PR is like great and it feels amazing. But if you're feeling weak at the gym, do you really want to go?

Well, also, I think just going back because I remember getting you on all these hormones and all of that process. You made yourself get back into the gym when you got on the progesterone and estradiol and you had the body composition scale and no matter how much you were doing, you were just not building muscle until you got on testosterone.

Do you want to talk a little bit more about how testosterone helped build muscle? Yeah, so I mean, and actually estrogen and progesterone help too. But since we're on testosterone right now, well, it helps the recovery of it.

It helps to build it. It helps like messaging signals to your cells to actually activate building new muscle. It does a lot. All of our hormones just are everywhere in our body and we need them for so many different things, not just for muscle building.

When I was just had the estrogen and the progesterone and everything was dialed in and I was doing the heavy weightlifting, I didn't change anything in my plans.

My body composition scale was like, oh, you maybe got like 0.01% more, you know, muscle this week or something like that. when i started the testosterone and it's very low dose very low dose so like it's four milligrams per day so it is the tiniest little dose it's kind of like what our bodies would be producing anyway so it's not super physiological it's not to where I'm going to get like the hair growth and the male pattern balding and all the other

things.

Muscle, Recovery, and Brain Fog

It's just a tiny little amount of cream that I rubbed in every morning and that's when I started seeing the muscle building and brain fog. It helps with brain fog too.

So let's break down some of the big things that it does because I think most people only think of it as like bodybuilding, and sex, right? So it does help with sex, right?

So arousal and desire. It is supporting your libido, your sexual thoughts. Maybe that's why men think about sex way more than us because they have so much more.

I don't know. It makes it easier to get turned on. How do you even explain how it does that? Well, I think it does through a couple different ways. One motivation and relaxation.

Yeah. Yeah. So it affects the brain, obviously. It affects arousal in the brain, but it also affects arousal in the genitals. So when the brain is more aroused, it's going to be more in tune and.

making your nerves more sensitive because you want to feel that touch. Right. And then also it has an impact on blood flow, which then when you have more blood flow to areas, including nerves, you can feel those areas more.

So I think that's probably the biggest things that it does on like how it improves sensitivity and arousal. You get more blood flow, you're going to be more sensitive.

Yeah, and multiple different layers, whether it's in the brain or in the genitals. Nerves work better when they have blood to them. That's just basic.

Yeah, and when you have more blood flow, you're also more lubricated, so it doesn't hurt as much. In midlife, we start to lose our estrogen, or even if you're on hormone therapy, you sometimes will have that vaginal dryness.

It does kind of help with that because it gets more blood flow there, and then you're able to secrete more secretions, and you still need estrogen for it.

It definitely helps with that. But also the energy, mood, and tension, it helps with all of that. In midlife especially, but you're a mom, you're a busy mom.

We have three businesses. You've got two kids, but one's on the inside contained at the moment. And then I have four kids, but three of them are adults, so I really only have one at home.

But we're very busy people. I have a very hard time turning off my brain to even think about doing anything because most of the time during the week, I'm not even getting home until eight, nine o'clock, depending on Izzy's schedule for volleyball or whatever is going on or if I'm at the gym or any of that stuff.

So I'm exhausted by the time I get home. The last thing on my mind is sex. you know, to the chagrin of my husband. But if you have more energy and you have enough oomph to keep going, that's another way that it can help you.

Well, I also think it plays a role in building desire through that motivation aspect and not wanting to take a risk. Even though like, you know, sex with your husband may not feel like a risky thing.

It is so it is if you don't lock the door and you have a teenager.

Sex Drive and Arousal

It is still like you know putting yourself out there and you know engaging because like honestly when it comes to sex you're gonna get more out of it the more you put into it yeah and so then that's gonna make it more enjoyable and so if you're willing to have the energy for it too yeah so if you're willing to put in the energy and like take that risk put yourself out there then it's gonna be more more enjoyable you're gonna want to do it more and then when it feels better for all the other things we talked about then that's also more motivating Yeah, exactly.

So that's how it helps with sex. Because it does, but it also does help with the muscle and the bone. And to go back to that, I know we kind of talked about it, but it helps to maintain the strength and the bone density.

Your skeletal muscle is huge in bone density. And again, in perimenopause, postmenopause, all that, we lose bone density, right? So even before you really start having any of the symptoms of perimenopause, you can be losing bone density.

Cause they say about 35 is where you start losing like 5% of your bone density. and each year. Or at least you stop building up bone density in your 30s.

So how it can help is it really helps you maintain that muscle and then it also helps you maintain bone because we have receptors in our bones, we have receptors in our muscles, we have receptors basically everywhere in our brain, everything.

Again, it helps to build the muscle, but it helps to maintain the muscle as well, which you need to keep it over time. And maintain the bones that the muscles rest on.

Yes, which helps with frailty, because one of the things that is the biggest for death in older age is frailty. You fall down, you break your hip, and a lot of people don't come back from that.

Yeah, I think in general people don't think about hormones for longevity, but I think testosterone, estrogen, progesterone for women are huge factors in maintaining longevity.

Yeah. If you want like quality of life. Think about when you felt the best, right? Is when all of your hormones were in a good level. Yeah. Like that's when you felt like you and they all do things to help support everything.

Yeah, like in your 20s, early 30s when all your hormones, they're kind of peak level. Okay. Let's talk about how testosterone changes over time. Testosterone tends to have a steadier decline throughout life.

I know we're mainly talking about testosterone today, but that is also what I have seen to be true with progesterone, whereas estriol is like One of the crazy blow-up car dancing guys that goes all over through as you decline until it just stops producing Yeah, but that's back to testosterone.

It's nice that it's under a steadier decline So it's easier to kind of jump in and manage once you start seeing the signs of decline and then you know dose appropriately as it continues to decline.

Right. And the signs of low testosterone, low desire, low libido, trouble getting turned on, difficulty reaching orgasm. People don't realize that it actually helps you have a better orgasm also.

So you know how sometimes it's really hard for women to have an orgasm? Kind of wonder if, well, unless it's a partner thing. But if it's not a partner thing, could be low testosterone.

Or if you've always been able to, and then suddenly it's really hard, that's the time maybe to get your testosterone checked. But it can also, if you have low testosterone, painful sex, uncomfortable sex, it doesn't have to necessarily be painful, but it's uncomfortable.

There's also stubborn fatigue. feeling weaker, which that was my huge thing and I hated it. I would have to like ask my husband to open a freaking jar because I just could not do it.

Even though I've always done things, I'm very independent. If you know me at all, I do not like asking anybody for help for anything.

Bone Density and Longevity

So that was very hard for me. Um, difficulty maintaining muscle, which is like, or building muscle, which is what I also went through with my perimenopause.

And then like hair thinning, you know, people forget that hair thinning is also testosterone. low testosterone or high testosterone. Yes, but low testosterone is more hair thinning and high testosterone is more like male pattern balding.

So like right at the crown, you lose your hair and then it just grows everywhere else. You don't want it when you are a female. So if you do get on testosterone therapy, like if you go talk to your doctor and they test your levels and you are on the lower side of normal, don't let them tell you just because you're in the normal range.

Everybody's normal range is different, technically. You know, everybody feels differently in the normal range. What normal ranges are based off of is averages of a population, not what people feel the best at.

So just because you're within a normal range means you're not in a pathological range. It does not mean that you are in a range where people actually feel good.

or have the benefits of it. Yeah. So if you are getting on testosterone and hopefully you're with a practitioner who actually knows what they're doing, it's not covered by insurance for females.

I think it's BS that we don't have it covered by insurance, but men do. Well, in general, it's still a very controversial topic in medicine. Yes. Because many doctors feel that there is never an indication for testosterone in women.

Yeah. In fact, the only thing that the FDA has said it is good for is for low libido. But not just low libido, distressingly… Distressingly low libido.

Yeah, distressingly low hypoactive sexual drive. Yes. I feel like women just aren't communicating that well enough to doctors. They're not using that specific language.

What if that's not distressing you, but the fatigue and the brain fog and the lack of muscle all is? That's what's bullcrap. Yeah. Also, I feel like a lot of women come in.

complaining about their low libido and wanting to have a libido. They want to want sex again, but because they're not saying, I am distressed by it, it's being dismissed.

Also, your insurance won't cover it even if you have that. Yeah. So it doesn't even matter. So what we do is we do compounding. But my whole point of this whole rant was you need to find somebody who knows what they're doing, who knows how to dose it.

And everybody's different. So you need to do testing again. You need to make sure that you're absorbing it enough. You need to make sure that you're not absorbing too much or that you're putting it on correct.

You need to work with a doctor who's educated in hormones and especially testosterone. for women.

Signs of Low Testosterone

It's very important because it's very different than for men. I really like the daily cream because it doesn't have the waxing and waning of either pellets or injections.

You get a big trough when you have those. Especially with the shot. I know some people really like the pellets

because when they're put in, correctly yeah when they're put in they can keep things pretty stable but then towards the end you start getting that trough and then it's like oh i'm really feeling it but um i've also seen with pellets that get dosed way too high and then you're kind of just stuck for a bit until until it wears off, which can be really not fun with all the side effects of high testosterone.

Because I also like to make clear that some of the side effects of high testosterone are not reversible just because they come down after a while. If they have turned your hairs into whiskers, they are now forever whiskers.

Just because you lower your testosterone, those aren't going away unless you get them lasered. And deepening of the voice definitely can happen. And a lot of times that does not come back.

yeah or some of the hair loss if you crown hair loss yeah if the specifically with hair follicles once they've changed like their like their type of follicle under hormonal influence it's impossible to change them back yeah so um that is always my caution with pellets especially in women because i have seen it yeah all too often where it's dosed too high and you can't just immediately pull them off before those side effects happen.

You can't take them out. So they're in, they're in. Yeah. To stop the side effects from getting worse, you kind of just have to wait it out. So that's why we like transdermal and the creams.

Yeah. It's just easier and you do it every day in the morning when your testosterone level is supposed to be the highest anyways. But there's also newer worsening acne and that one's really distressing, especially for people in midlife.

We're not supposed to be freaking having acne anymore. You know, I also feel like a teenager. Yeah, I remember that oily skin that we finally got rid of, you know.

It also will cause like stubborn belly fat because what happens is when you either have too much testosterone or you're just aromatizing things a lot for many, many, many, many different reasons.

So when you're aromatizing all of your testosterone into estrogen, you get the estrogen belly, which a lot of us in perimenopause and menopausal already know and then you know sometimes it can really cause like irregular periods if they have too much and even amenorrhea which is no periods.

Yeah and it can really impact fertility so even if you aren't in perimenopause and you're having these symptoms of low testosterone you're considering getting on it for various reasons then you know you've got to be careful because it could really impact your fertility.

Let's talk about what to ask for and when to ask for it. If you are having any of the low testosterone symptoms, they could be also symptoms of a million different things.

Like we live in a hectic world right now.

Testing and Timing Hormone Labs

So, you know, you may have a little libido because we can't shut our brains off. Yeah, because stress can really impact all of it. Cortisol is a hormone.

All hormones play off of each other. So just because you have these symptoms doesn't mean you have low T, but let's… Yes. I will say that the hallmark ones of low T versus like estrogen, progesterone, just stress in and of itself, I would say would be, yes, the low libido, but you can have a low libido with estrogen too.

The unexplained fatigue, let's say you are on HRT or your estradiol and your progesterone are in good levels, and you're still having that weird fatigue and muscle weakness.

I think muscle weakness is one of the biggest things. And then mood symptoms, it's if they don't improve when your

other hormones are good and the mood symptoms, and it's not like a depression of like, like suicidal ideation or anything like that.

It's like Eeyore. Yeah. It's Eeyore. It's Eeyore. Just kind of a flat affect. Yeah. And it's just kind of like, oh, oh well, I guess this is all life is.

I'm just going to sit here. It's fine. You know, it's just, it is very Eeyore. Yeah. That apathy. Yeah. Those are the symptoms that you would want to consider asking your doctor to test your testosterone levels.

So let's maybe talk about what should be tested. Yes. So the thing that some people who are not as well versed in hormones will test, they'll test the male testosterone and it's not microscopic.

We do make more testosterone than estrogen in our bodies as females, but it's still very tiny amount. So, um, there is, you know, testosterone free and total, and I always do the microscopic.

So make sure that they are testing to, to see. the correct level of testosterone. I also do sex hormone binding globulin, estradiol and estrone and progesterone.

Sometimes test prolactin because that can suppress all the other hormones. So those are the main hormone tests that you want to get done if you really want to evaluate is testosterone playing a role in this.

Get the free and the total. And it's very important that you get them done before 10 a.m. Yes. Because your levels are the highest before 10 a.m. So you don't have to be fasting or anything like that.

It just needs to be before 10 a.m. And with testosterone, it does get higher at like mid-cycle or at the end of follicular early luteal phase because that's when you're horniest, right?

Your body is trying to make you get pregnant. And so you get more horny around ovulation. So it is at a higher level around ovulation. So if you are still ovulating, it would be a good time to test testosterone then.

If you're having a regular 28 to 30 day cycle, day 14-ish is a good time to test it because it should be a little bit higher because your body's trying to basically make you horny to make a baby.

Trying to convince you to have kids. Yeah. Basically. Um, okay.

Sleep, Nutrition, and Strength Training

Oh, sleep. It helps with sleep too, guys. My sleep got deeper when I started the testosterone and I started staying asleep with estrogen and I started falling asleep with progesterone.

So we've got all these ones playing into the sleep, which you need in order to rebuild your body and keep your muscles that you just broke down at the gym.

And that's our body's time to detox too. So if you don't get good sleep, The brain fog is going to get even worse, even if your hormones are good, because you're not detoxing your brain.

When your brain shuts down for the night, well, it doesn't shut down, but you know, goes to sleep, goes to recovery mode. It's detoxing everything out at the time.

And that's how you get your memory set. That's how everything happens. Really, you just need to go through all the different phases of sleep to keep your brain nice and healthy and the hormones, all of the hormones, progesterone, testosterone, estrogen play a role in those different phases.

Yeah. And it's not just… It's not just using all these hormones. It's not just having the testosterone cream, right? You need to help your body and support your body.

You need quality sleep. You need to manage chronic stress. You need to eat right, which we always make sure people are doing. You need a lot of protein.

It's a lot more than people think. You need to eat fat. If you're trying to support your testosterone production naturally, you need to eat fat. Hormones are made off of cholesterol.

Yeah, which is from fat. So you have to have fat to make hormones. Yes. And the fat-free diets are terrible for hormones. They're terrible. Don't do it.

I grew up in the 80s and 90s. We were always told fat-free is the way to go. And they added sugar to everything fat-free. So then everybody started having cancer and heart attacks and all these things.

We're like, what's going on? We're supposed to be healthier. Sugar is just going to cause a lot more health problems than eating some fat. Super inflammatory.

Yeah. Than just eating healthy amounts of Yeah. Healthy fats, please. You can have the bad fats too, but in moderation. Mostly healthy. More healthy fats than bad fats.

You need both. You shouldn't really call them healthy fats versus bad fats. They're supposed to be just eaten in a ratio. You need all of them. You just need to make sure you eat both of them.

And also lifting weights. Resistance training actually helps to boost your testosterone as well. Yes, which is true in both men's and women's. So how can they advocate for themselves?

in the regular conventional system. Have fun.

Advocating for Care and Safe Treatment

Really, you're going to have to really push for the labs to get drawn, and you can bring in research to show your doctor, but you might just have to get a couple different opinions because your doctor may be great on some things, but you know, nothing against doctors, it's a hard job, but you know, it's impossible to stay up on everything that's changing in medicine all the time.

And so you might just have to get another opinion. That's probably the best way to advocate for yourself is to go to someone who is specializing more in hormones and who is staying up to date on the latest research of hormones.

Which is also showing that it is a lot safer than we thought before, so they actually took the black box warnings off, finally, which is great. You also need to make sure that who you talk to has at least one compounding pharmacy that they really, really trust and that they've actually done the work to investigate that compounding pharmacy because that's where we generally get our testosterone from.

We found one that really works with us well and they have a great versabase cream that is very lightweight. Well, because women if you you literally can't get it from a regular pharmacy because they don't offer doses that are appropriate for women.

Yes I mean technically there are people that will prescribe the androgel which is the male form the gel. It's very hard to control the dosing because it's like less than a pea-sized dose and so it gets dosed wrong a lot It'd be easy for you to accidentally put on too much.

Yeah. And if you do that consistently, you'll have the side effects. It also transfers more. I found that it transfers more than the VersaBase cream because the VersaBase cream just soaks right in and it dries like right away because you do have to be careful.

So if you do get on it, you need to be careful. You wash your hands right away because it can transfer to pets. It can transfer to other loved ones. So just make sure you wash your hands right away.

But in general, regular pharmacies are not making products that are designed for women for a dosing that's appropriate for them. So more often than not, you're going to need to be getting it from a compounded pharmacy and you got to find a doctor who's vetted them.

So that's testosterone for you. We felt that one was important because nobody ever talks about it for women. Yeah, no one talks about it for women, but we make more testosterone than we make estradiol or progesterone.

And it does a lot in the body. It does. And we need it too, not just men. All right. Well, thanks for tuning in. This has been another episode of Hormone Heroines.

We'll see you next time. Bye, guys.

Blossoming Longevity Programs and Outro

You know how us women are always just pushing through it and then when we go to find help, we're often not taken seriously or told, oh, that's just part of being a woman.

Yeah, we've lived through it, prioritizing everybody else and then our own health falls to the wayside. That's why we started blossoming longevity by women or women.

We created programs that meet women where they are, addressing the root causes and all of the struggles that come with every stage of life. Like our vitality program.

It reconnects you with your youth and your life so that you can thrive through the years. And with Clarity, we go beyond the skin to restore your health, clear your complexion so you can feel radiant from the inside out.

With our silhouette program, we help you reclaim your strength, optimize your metabolism, and your body composition so that you can feel great in your body again.

And with Harmony, we help you rebalance your hormones to heal from within so you can feel vibrant and ready to take on the world. That is why it's time to stop saddling and start flourishing.

Visit FlossamingLongevity.com today. Thanks for watching Hormone Heroines. If this episode spoke to you, follow the show and share it with someone who also needs to hear it.

And write a review. That helps more people find their way back to balance. See you next week.