

Module 3 Lesson 6

Transcript

I haven't really had the opportunity to talk about some of the gender differences that come into play when we think about aging, so I'm taking this lesson to highlight special considerations for our fathers, sons, baby daddies, friends, and loved ones. I'm talking about the male aging cycle. Specifically, we're going to talk about andropause, and I'll define this for those who've never heard of this term before. The role of testosterone and symptoms to look for when it comes to andropause, and where you come in with your clients. It feels to me like we're in a little bit of a revolution in social, sexual, biological identification, but I still come across articles from the 2000s that say things like, "Boys should be this and do this," and what to expect through the life stages that just seem really dated. I tried hard to push all that aside, and here, just stick to the facts, to avoid conjecture, and educate you in this lesson about the science and chemistry of males, at least what we know right now.

When I zero in, what do you think I'm left with here? If you said testosterone, you are correct. Really, the male aging cycle is determined almost exclusively by the fantastic powers of testosterone alone. We talk all the time about menopause in women, but why the heck are we not talking about andropause? 20% of men over the age of 60, and 30% to 50% of men over the age of 80 are going to experience andropause, which is a significant decline in testosterone production, very similar to menopause in women, actually. Symptoms of andropause might be a decrease in muscle mass and overall strength, decreased bone mineral density and increased risk of osteoporosis, low libido and erectile dysfunction, decreased energy and depression, cognitive impairment. I think the biggest takeaway that I want you to know about testosterone has nothing to do with sexual health or development, but that study after study finds that higher testosterone is linked to stronger brain health.

It's linked to better cognitive health, delaying Alzheimer's, and better brain preservation when compared to lower testosterone levels. That being said, testosterone is complicated. Replacing testosterone losses isn't straightforward, and testosterone therapy is something we're still learning a lot about. Also, while I'm at it, there's evidence that testosterone levels may be linked to depression and mood in general. That makes a lot of sense to me. I have a son, and I've seen teenage boys moods swing like Tarzan on a vine, because women aren't the only ones with hormonal cycles. Male testosterone increases through childhood, peaks around 20, and slowly declines after. Males have daily hormone cycles too, where testosterone levels vary, and can impact mood dramatically. As testosterone declines with age, so does muscle mass. Fat mass increases, and other physiological

changes kick in. I know this sounds familiar, probably, when I say we really never stopped growing and changing.

We're constantly evolving. Again, something you really have to pay attention to with your clients, especially if you work with an older population of men. So especially in older adults, a healthy diet, exercise, hydration, stress management, and sleep will combat some of the losses from a lower testosterone supply. Again, this is why when you're working with somebody, you can't just focus on their food. You have to look at all of the other pillars. Focus on each pillar becomes even more and more important. You can't overlook sleep, for example, because research is super strong that sleep apnea decreases testosterone levels. You may be referring someone to a doctor to do a sleep study to see if they need a sleep apnea machine. The same is true with diet. Overweight people are more likely to have lower testosterone. We also know that testosterone is super sensitive in people with diabetes, hypertension, and a whole host of other medical illnesses.

I'm just going to add in the name of interesting factoids here, that testosterone is also blamed for why men have a shorter life span than women. The average life expectancy is 77 compared to women at 81. Just a little fun fact for you. We can blame testosterone. Researchers in this field say testosterone can increase the incidence of coronary heart disease and reduce immune function in males, which may be why testosterone affects lifespan. I mean, hormones are super powerful, but isn't it nice to know they don't just affect women? All right, let's review. Andropause, which is a significant decline in testosterone production is seen in 20% of men over the age of 60, and 30% to 50% of men over the age of 80. Symptoms can include decreased muscle mass and strength, decreased bone mineral density, low libido, erectile dysfunction, decreased energy, depression, and cognitive impairment. When you're working with aging clients, those eight pillars of nutritious life are oh so important for managing the symptoms that naturally come along with aging. A healthy diet, exercise, hydration, stress management, and sleep will combat some of the losses from a lower testosterone supply. I will see you in the next lesson.