

# The Healthy Male

NEWSLETTER OF ANDROLOGY AUSTRALIA  
Australian Centre of Excellence in Male Reproductive Health

Winter 2011  
issue 39

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Merv Hughes and Matthew Richardson at the MCG for the launch of 'Talk about your tackle'

## Aussie men urged to talk 'tackle'

Andrology Australia recently launched a national campaign featuring former AFL start Matthew Richardson, which encourages men to talk rather than risk ignoring issues with the 'bits below the belt'.

The 'Talk about your tackle' campaign was launched at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on April 13 in front of guests including Richardson, Merv Hughes, and outgoing Victorian Governor, Professor David de Kretser AC.

Hosted by Channel 10 sports presenter Anthony Hudson, the launch saw the centrepiece of the campaign unveiled – a Community Service Announcement (CSA) featuring Richardson and his father Alan, who played in a premiership-winning Richmond team in 1967.

The CSA highlights the awkward

and uncomfortable silences between men when it comes to discussing important issues like personal health with each other and their doctors.

Matthew Richardson said he and his father got involved with the campaign because it dealt with issues that affected people they both knew.

"This is such an important initiative, and if we can contribute to getting the message heard by Australian men, and maybe shift their attitudes, that can only be a good thing," he said.

The CSA has been distributed to a number of television and radio stations and a dedicated campaign micro-site has been created.

The micro-site provides a range of information and resources regarding male reproductive health issues. To learn more, visit [www.talkaboutyourtackle.org](http://www.talkaboutyourtackle.org).



Welcome to the new look *The Healthy Male*. In this re-vamped version of our newsletter we have tried to take on board your suggestions. If you have any feedback on the new look, please email [media@andrologyaustralia.org](mailto:media@andrologyaustralia.org).

The past few months have been a very exciting time for Andrology Australia. In April, we launched our much anticipated campaign, "Talk about your tackle" at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Hopefully you have seen the Community Service Announcement featuring former AFL stars Matthew and Alan Richardson, but if not – take a look now at [www.talkaboutyourtackle.org](http://www.talkaboutyourtackle.org).

We have also been busy distributing resources for International Men's Health Week (June 13 – 19).

Our Ambassador Merv Hughes did a short tour of Western Victoria encouraging men to talk about their health, and many other groups held events during June.

This edition of *The Healthy Male* covers a number of topics, but our Focus On article, by Andrology Australia's medical adviser Dr Carolyn Allan, looks at the myth of "menopause" or "andropause" and what really happens to male hormones as men age. Testosterone is a vital hormone for men, but it's important to remember that it isn't a "cure-all" for the symptoms of ageing.

*Rob I McLachlan*

Professor Rob McLachlan

## Letters to the editor

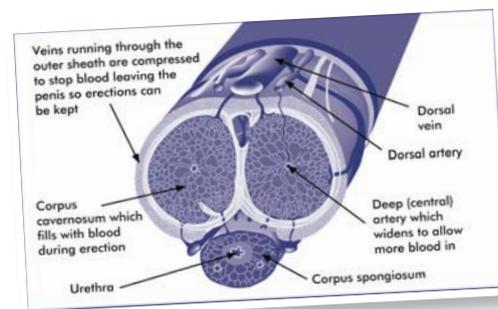
### Balanced advice about PSA testing

How refreshing to see your balanced advice about PSA testing in your Healthy Male – Issue 37. Four colleagues, one only 52, unwisely (with no symptoms) – having been 'sold' at a Rotary meeting had a PSA test. All four now suffer from one level or another or both – incontinence and impotence. That was four years ago. Their GPs did not explain the possibility of what might happen if they had a PSA; they just took their blood samples. All the GPs referred to urologists who specialised in radical prostatectomy; no option of radiotherapy or low dose brachytherapy. Men and women are entitled to all the information: transparent, informed decision making should be the order of the day. Clive (South Perth, WA).

### No inclusion of same sex issues

Again having read another informative issue (No. 38 – Autumn 2011) I reflect on the apparent non inclusion of same sex and solo sex activities and issues. Talking about men's "tackle" in such situations would seem to be an even more difficult area to approach. David (Launceston, TAS).

## Health spot



A cross-section of the penis

Some of the causes of occasional erectile dysfunction include excessive intake of alcohol, anxiety and tiredness. One of the most common causes of erectile dysfunction in middle-aged men is lack of sleep.

### HOW COMMON IS ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION?

Erectile dysfunction is very common and becomes even more common in older men. An Australian survey shows that at least one in five men over the age of 40 years, increasing to about two in three men over the age of 70 years, often experience erectile problems, and about one in ten men are completely unable to have erections. With each decade of age, the chance of having erectile problems increases.

For more information, visit [www.andrologyaustralia.org](http://www.andrologyaustralia.org), or call 1300 303 878.

### WHAT IS ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION?

Erectile dysfunction is when a man is unable to get and/or keep an erection that allows sexual activity with penetration.<sup>1</sup> It is not a disease, but a symptom of some other problem, either physical, psychological or a mixture of both.

Erectile dysfunction should not be confused with low libido (little interest in sex) or the inability to reach an orgasm or ejaculate. Premature (too early) and retrograde ejaculation (back into the bladder) are also different problems that need a different approach to diagnosis and treatment.

Occasional erectile dysfunction is normal. There is no need to worry about the occasional failure to get or keep an erection.

<sup>1</sup> Feldman HA, Goldstein I, Hatzichristou DG, Krane RJ, McKinley JB. Impotence and its medical and psychosocial correlates: Results of the Massachusetts Male Ageing Study. *Journal of Urology* 1994, 151:54-61

## Focus on:

# Male menopause – do

Author: \*Dr Carolyn Allan, Andrology Australia Medical Adviser

Feeling tired and grumpy?  
Maybe a little emotional?  
If you're a middle-aged  
male, these symptoms  
might be hormone-related,  
but no, you're not going  
through *man*-opause.

It's true that signs of men's low testosterone are similar to symptoms of menopause: low energy, mood swings, irritability, poor concentration, reduced muscle strength and bone density, and a lack of interest in sex. But unlike women, whose oestrogen levels fall rapidly when they go through menopause, men's testosterone declines much more modestly and gradually.

Testosterone levels in men are highest between the ages of 20 and 30 years, and from 30 to 80 years they drop by around a third. Some men will experience a greater drop than others, particularly if they're overweight or obese.

Testosterone is essential for good health because it stimulates the growth of muscles, bones, and the bone marrow that makes red blood cells. So, testosterone or "androgen" deficiency – which affects one in 200 Australian men under 60 – can have a major effect on the body's ability to function normally.



**OFTEN, LOW TESTOSTERONE LEVELS CAN BE A SIGN OF UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS.**

The "manopause" myth has been perpetuated by the interest in testosterone replacement therapy (TRT) as an elixir of youth to improve the symptoms and signs of ageing. Testosterone therapy offers benefits for men with

known causes of androgen deficiency, but there is a lack of data to define the level of deficiency that warrants this treatment. If the cause of androgen deficiency is unknown, treatment needs to be tailored to the individual.

Testosterone treatment certainly shouldn't be requested or prescribed in the belief that it's a "cure-all" for symptoms of ageing. For ageing men without classic androgen deficiency the jury is still out on the effectiveness of testosterone replacement therapy. The safety of the treatment – particularly on the prostate and cardiovascular system – is unclear, and the benefits seem relatively modest. There is certainly no remarkable return to youthful vigour. Often, low testosterone levels can be a sign of underlying health conditions. Low testosterone levels are associated with various chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and depression.

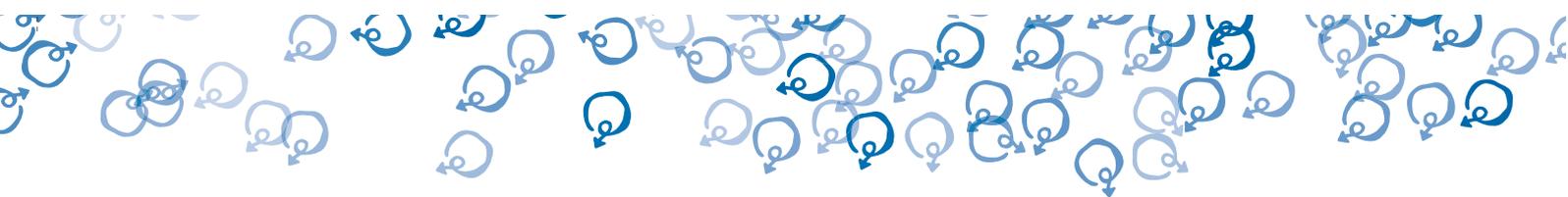
The Massachusetts Male Ageing Study (the largest study of male ageing) found that chronic illness, use of prescription medication, obesity or excessive alcohol intake were associated with a 10 to 15 per cent reduction in serum testosterone levels (testosterone in the blood) in men aged over 40 years.

Treatment, then, should focus on reducing the risk factors for these conditions (i.e. weight loss, reduced alcohol intake) rather than the testosterone level.

While the idea that men, too, go through menopause might be a playful explanation of the ageing process, it shouldn't be taken too seriously, especially if serious symptoms of chronic diseases are dismissed.

\*This article was published in *The Conversation* ([www.theconversation.edu.au](http://www.theconversation.edu.au)) on June 6, 2011.





# debunking the myth



## Testosterone Deficiency

### WHAT IS TESTOSTERONE?

Testosterone is the most important androgen (male sex hormone) in men and plays a key role in reproductive and sexual function. Testosterone is responsible for producing the physical characteristics of male puberty such as penis development and testicular growth, and for those features typical of adult men such as facial and body hair.

Testosterone also stimulates cells in the testes to help in the production of sperm. In addition, testosterone is important for the good health of many nonreproductive tissues in the body. It plays an important role in the growth of bones and muscles, and affects mood, sex drive and certain aspects of mental ability.

### HOW IS TESTOSTERONE PRODUCTION CONTROLLED?

Luteinizing hormone (LH) and follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) are the two important messengers made by the pituitary gland in the brain that act to

trigger testis function. Once stimulated with LH, the cells in the testes produce testosterone.

### WHAT IS TESTOSTERONE DEFICIENCY?

Testosterone (or androgen) deficiency is when the body is unable to produce enough testosterone for the body to function normally.

Although not a life-threatening condition, it can have a major affect on quality of life.

### HOW COMMON IS TESTOSTERONE DEFICIENCY?

Testosterone deficiency affects about one in 200 men under 60 years of age.

It is usually the result of genetic disorders (eg Klinefelter's syndrome), damage to the testes (infection, trauma, medications, chemo/radiotherapy), undescended testes, or rarely, a lack of hormones produced by the brain (eg Kallmann's syndrome or disorders of the pituitary gland).

### WHAT IS THE 'NORMAL' TESTOSTERONE REFERENCE RANGE?

A reference range is used as a guide by testing laboratories and doctors to decide whether a man's hormone levels are considered normal or whether treatment is needed.

Ninety-five per cent of healthy people have hormone levels that fall within a standard reference range. However, a few healthy people (5 per cent) have levels outside the range.

The 'normal' testosterone reference range for healthy, young adult men is considered to be between about 8 and 27 nanomolar approximately.

### For more information

For more detailed information, please call 1300 303 878 for Andrology Australia's booklet on Androgen Deficiency, or visit [www.andrologyaustralia.org](http://www.andrologyaustralia.org).

## Merv talks tackle in the Top End

Andrology Australia Ambassador and former Test cricketer Merv Hughes recently visited the Top End, encouraging men to talk about their "tackle" in the lead up to International Men's Health Week (June 13-19).

Merv spoke at a free men's health night

- 'Talking Tackle with Merv Hughes' - on Wednesday, May 18, at Dinah Beach Cruising Yacht Club, Frances Bay.

He was joined by local health service representatives, who gave information about what was available for men in the area.

Merv, who has been an Ambassador for Andrology Australia since 2006, said men in general "don't like to talk about the bits below the belt".

"Let's face it. Unless the subject is sport, men aren't always the best talkers. And we really struggle when it comes to talking about reproductive health," he said.

"But as you get older, it's more and more important to address health concerns

early while you're in the best position to deal with them."

Merv said reproductive health issues were common and were often linked with more serious conditions like diabetes or heart disease.

Event organiser Jason Bonson from the Men's Health Strategy Unit in the NT Department of Health said he was glad locals went along to listen to what Merv had to say.

"It was a great opportunity to hear Merv have a yarn about cricket and fishing, and take home some important health information," Mr Bonson said.

If you would like to order resources featuring Merv Hughes, please visit our website or call 1300 303 878.



## Research round-up

### Diet and prostate cancer: food for thought?

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men in Australia and other western countries and there is great interest in knowing whether the 'western' diet may be linked to this common cancer.

A recent article has reviewed the research on diet and prostate cancer,<sup>3</sup> noting that diet is very difficult to measure accurately in research studies. This makes it hard to reach conclusions about the role of different aspects of diet in diseases such as cancer.

The paper reports some research suggesting that these foods may be beneficial in either the prevention of prostate cancer or in delaying progression in men with prostate cancer:

- green tea
- isoflavones (found in soy beans, tofu, kidney beans, chick peas, lentils and peanuts)

- lycopenes (found in tomatoes)
- some vegetables (e.g. broccoli, cabbage, brussel sprouts, cauliflower)
- omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (found in fish such as tuna and salmon)

There is also some evidence that a diet high in fat and meat (especially well-cooked meat) might increase the risk of prostate cancer. Other studies have not been able to show any protective effect of vitamin supplements.

One of the take-home messages from this review is that more well-designed studies are needed to understand the links between diet and prostate cancer.

In the meantime, a diet high in vegetables and fish and low in fat and well cooked meat could be beneficial for prostate cancer risk as well as helping general health.



<sup>3</sup> Hori S, Butler E, McLoughlin J. Prostate cancer and diet: food for thought? (Review article). BJU International 2011;107:1348-1360.

## In brief

### Sign up to Male Briefs and win

If you are a health professional, sign up to our e-bulletin *Male Briefs* by August 31, 2011, and you could win an orchidometer valued at \$150 RRP. Visit [www.andrologyaustralia.org](http://www.andrologyaustralia.org) and enter your details. Terms and conditions are available under the 'About Us' section of the website.

### New Male Infertility booklet now available

Andrology Australia's consumer guide on Male Infertility has been updated and is now available for order via 1300 303 878 or via the website.

### Connect with Andrology Australia via social media

Andrology Australia has profiles on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Please "follow", "like" or "subscribe" to connect with us and stay informed on the latest happenings in men's health.



### Men's Health Week evaluation

Keep an eye out for the International Men's Health Week 2011 survey, which will gather valuable information about your men's health events. It is also an opportunity to provide feedback on our resources. The survey can be completed online, but if do not have internet access please call us on 1300 303 878 and you will be sent a hard copy. All complete survey responses will go into the draw to win a \$100 gift voucher.

### Letters to the editor

If you would like to submit a Letter to the Editor, please email [media@andrologyaustralia.org](mailto:media@andrologyaustralia.org) or post to Andrology Australia, PO Box 5418, Clayton VIC 3168.

## Latest News

# Running a great men's health event

**W**ant to learn how to run a great men's health event? Andrology Australia will be facilitating a workshop during The Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) 4th National Conference at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre on August 23.

The workshop titled, "Running a great men's health event" will explain how to use the popular Andrology Australia Men's Health Education Kit to support men's sheds in planning and delivering a men's health event.

It will also provide feedback from 'Shedders' who have already used the Kit in their local men's shed.

The Men's Health Education Topics covered in the workshop will include:

- Getting local support to help plan an event
- Choosing an appropriate presentation and sourcing a speaker
- Promoting the event
- Ordering resources to support the event
- Evaluating the event

An Education Kit will be provided to all participants of the workshop.

For more information and to register your interest in attending the AMSA conference and workshop, please visit: [www.dconferences.com.au/mensshed](http://www.dconferences.com.au/mensshed).



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### NEWSLETTER OF ANDROLOGY AUSTRALIA

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