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NATURAL WAYS TO BOOST YOUR TESTOSTERONE LEVEL

Testosterone plays a vital role in men's health. And it's more than just maintaining the sex drive, although that is important to most men. Testosterone is a hormone that can help men maintain strong bones, maintain muscle mass and strength, and modify fat storage.

The problem is that as men age, their testosterone levels gradually decrease. The decrease is usually about 1 percent a year after age 30. Fortunately, there are steps men can take to naturally boost testosterone levels to help counteract the decline. Here is a brief list:

- **Lift weights or do strength training.** When this is done 2-3 times per week, it can stimulate testosterone production. This in turn helps you maintain healthy muscle mass, strength, and a higher resting metabolism. Strength training also aids in weight control and helps prevent accumulation of fat in the abdomen and muscles.
- **Get adequate vitamin D.** Vitamin D levels are positively correlated with testosterone levels. You can get vitamin D by exposing your skin to the sun in the summer during mid-day (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.). You can also get vitamin D by taking a daily supplement of 1,000 to 2,000 IU daily. Either way is beneficial.
- **Get adequate zinc.** If you are low in zinc, you may also be low in testosterone. Zinc is found in whole grains, fortified breakfast cereals, nuts, legumes, and milk products. If you take a zinc supplement, be sure not to exceed 100 percent of the recommended amount as it can become toxic in high levels.
- **Eat nuts and legumes.** These foods are high in D-aspartic acid, which promotes

testosterone levels. Soybeans, lentils, and almonds are all good sources of this nutrient. Nuts are also good for both the heart and the brain.

- **Eat garlic.** Garlic may help increase testosterone. Try seasoning pasta, soups, and fish with garlic.
- **Get adequate rest.** If you are short on sleep you may also be short on testosterone production. Getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep daily will help you feel your best.
- **Lose weight.** If you are overweight, trimming 10 to 15 pounds may help your body produce more testosterone naturally. In a clinical trial, men who lost 17 pounds showed a significant increase in testosterone levels.
- **If you've been told that you have low testosterone levels,** talk to your doctor about your options.

STAY HYDRATED TO AVOID KIDNEY STONES

Hot weather is a high-risk time for kidney stones. Why? It's largely due to dehydration. In hot weather, you sweat more. So if you don't drink enough water, you could be in trouble. When you're dehydrated, your body fluids become more concentrated, which increases the likelihood of kidney stone formation. Passing a kidney stone is very painful. About one in every 10 people will develop a kidney stone during their lifetime. Here are some things you can do to lower your risk.

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Water is best. Experts recommend drinking at least 2 to 2.5 liters (8-10 cups) of water a day in hot weather. Your urine production is the best indicator of good hydration. You should produce at least 2.5 liters (10 cups) of urine daily to minimize kidney stone risk. This means you should urinate at least every two hours, and the urine should look mostly clear with little yellow.
- **Be careful of drinking too much iced tea in hot weather.** Some urologists think iced tea



may promote the formation of the most common type of kidney stone – the calcium oxalate stone. Black tea is high in oxalates. Lemonade may be a safer choice. The citric acid in the lemon inhibits urinary crystal formation. But lemonade comes with lots of sugar and calories. Water is still the best choice. Try flavoring it with a little freshly-squeezed lemon juice.

- **Eat healthy foods.** Research shows that a diet high in refined sugars, salt, and animal proteins increases the risk of kidney stones. These types of foods increase calcium loss in the urine. When animal protein is digested, it increases calcium in the urine, which then promotes crystal formation in the urine. Eating foods with excess sodium and high fructose corn syrup, particularly if your magnesium level is low, can increase the calcium level in your urine and cause stone formation. Good sources of magnesium are dark leafy greens, whole grains, nuts, and seeds.
- **Contrary to what you might think,** non-fat dairy products (and other foods that are naturally high in calcium) lower your risk for stone formation. However, taking high doses of calcium supplements increases the risk. Get your calcium primarily from food sources.

The best therapy for preventing kidney stones is proper hydration. Drink plenty of water, and limit salt, refined sugars, and a high intake of animal proteins. And eat more plant-based proteins such as legumes, soy, and nuts.

THE IMPACT OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES ON DIABETES

About 23 million people in the United States have type 2 diabetes. Left unchecked, type 2 diabetes can lead to heart disease, kidney disease, blindness, stroke, nerve damage, and poor circulation. About 80 percent of all non-traumatic lower limb amputations are caused by diabetes. But it's largely a preventable disease.



Getting regular exercise and maintaining a healthy weight can help. A recent study also confirmed previous findings that eating more fruits and vegetables can lower the risk for diabetes.

Researchers looked at fruit and vegetable consumption in 21,831 men and women for 12 years. None of the participants had diabetes at the start of the study. But some developed type 2 diabetes during the study. Researchers found that those who ate the most fruits and vegetables (5-6 servings or more daily) cut their risk for diabetes by 74 percent, compared to those who ate the least amount of fruits and vegetables daily.

Fruit and vegetable intake was measured by vitamin C levels. Researchers found that the higher vitamin C intake from fruits and vegetables, the lower the risk for diabetes. But vitamin C from supplements did not help prevent diabetes.

There are no clear answers yet as to why fruits and vegetables are protective against diabetes. But they clearly have many health advantages. For example, they:

- Help control weight and prevent obesity
- Are low in calories, cholesterol, and saturated fat
- Generally have a low glycemic index, and are high in fiber
- Help lower the risk for high blood pressure and heart disease

Eating more fruits and vegetables may require changing eating habits. But it's not impossible. Add vegetables to soups. Eat more fresh salads. Experiment with new vegetables in a stir-fry. Top breakfast cereal with fresh fruit. Have fruit salad for dessert. Adults should eat 7-9 servings of fruits and vegetables daily for best health.

DRINK WATER TO LOSE WEIGHT

About 68 percent of all adults in the United States are either overweight or obese. Many studies show that carrying around excess weight can lead to high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and other serious health problems. We know that physical

activity and a healthy diet are essential to weight loss. But what can people do if they just aren't ready to make those major lifestyle changes? A recent study found that drinking water can help.

Researchers looked at how much water and other liquids 174 overweight women drank in a one-year study. They also looked at diet, physical activity, weight, percent body fat, and waist circumference of the women. Researchers then collected these data at the start of the study, and at two, six, and 12 months.



Water intake was measured both in grams and as a percent of all liquids consumed. While controlling for possible confounders (exercise, diet, etc.), researchers looked at water intake and changes in both weight and body composition. They found that increases in daily water intake in terms of grams of water consumed aided in weight loss and body-fat reduction. An increase in daily water intake as a percentage of liquids consumed also produced weight loss. The weight loss caused by drinking more water was independent of other possible factors.

Just how the extra water intake led to weight loss is not fully understood. But it appears to have encouraged healthier eating habits, such as drinking water in place of soft drinks and other higher calorie beverages. Note that one large soda contains about 300 calories, compared to zero calories in water.

Water also benefits the kidneys and bladder, regulates your body temperature in hot climates, and helps your blood circulation. Drinking water might also help suppress appetite and therefore calorie intake.

Drinking water frequently throughout the day is easy and inexpensive to do. The side benefits could be weight loss and overall good health.

EXERCISE 15 MINUTES A DAY TO LIVE LONGER

Given that there are 24 hours in a day, most people probably have 15 minutes a day to spare. After all, the average adult watches four hours of TV a day. And then there's all the time people spend using smartphones and tablets to play games, chat with friends, and surf the Internet. Fifteen minutes may not seem like much, but it can make a very big difference in a person's health.

For most, exercise isn't high on the to-do list when free time presents itself. An estimated 80 percent of the adult population gets little to no exercise. Tired, overweight, and out of shape people don't feel like exercising. And when they don't exercise, the pounds start adding up and overall health starts going down.

However, a recent study suggests that even 15 minutes of exercise a day can help turn things around. Researchers followed 400,000 people for 12 years and tracked their level of weekly exercise. The group that logged just 15 minutes a day of moderate-intensity exercise showed increased health benefits compared to the inactive group. Researchers found that a daily 15-minute workout reduced the risk of early death by 14 percent. It also reduced the risk of dying from cancer by 10 percent, and increased life expectancy by three years. Every additional 15 minutes of exercise per day further reduced risk factors and increased longevity.

Fifteen minutes really isn't a lot of time. But if you're being active for that length of time, it's enough to lower your risk for heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

LACK OF SLEEP RAISES BLOOD PRESSURE



More than 7 million deaths occur each year worldwide due to high blood pressure. New research indicates that lack of adequate sleep could be contributing to this major health problem worldwide.

In a recent study, researchers identified 578 young adults who all had good blood pressure levels. Then they followed these people for 5 years, tracking how much sleep they got regularly. They found that for each hour of reduction in sleep duration the risk of developing high blood pressure increased by 37 percent in both men and women. Most studies find that people who get at least 7-8 hours of sleep daily have the best health and lowest mortality levels.

Short sleep duration is linked with higher blood pressure. If you want to keep your blood pressure in a healthy range (less than 120/80 for best health), be sure to get adequate rest daily. Aim for at least 7-8 hours of sleep daily. Taking a mid-day nap can also be helpful in reaching your 7-8 hours

Book Recommendation



Fresh from the Vegan Slow Cooker

200 Ultra-Convenient, Super Tasty, Completely Animal Free One Dish Dinners

by
Robin Robertson

Robin addresses any lingering skepticism readers may have about whether slow-cookers can have delicious, meat-free applications, and she shows how to take into account the water content of vegetables and the absorptive qualities of grains when vegan slow-cooking.

It includes eleven recipe chapters, four of which focus on main courses. There are chapters devoted to snacks and appetizers, desserts, breads and breakfasts, and even one on drinks. The many soy-free and gluten-free recipes are clearly identified.

This book offers readers loads of ways to expand their vegan repertoire and to get maximum value from their investment in a slow-cooker.



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Chef's Corner



Ratatouille

Ratatouille is similar to a hearty stew. It's delicious served over brown rice or stuffed inside a wonton wrapper.

- 1 med Onion, chopped
- 2 cloves Garlic, minced
- 1 med Green pepper, chopped
- 2 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 med Eggplant, peeled and diced
- 1 can 4-oz Mushrooms, sliced but not drained
- 1 can 14.5-oz Tomato sauce, herb flavored
- 1 small Zucchini, diced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp Oregano, dried
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp Basil, dried
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp Thyme, dried
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp Onion salt
- 1 tsp Salt

In a large saucepan, sauté onion, garlic, and green pepper in olive oil until tender. Add remaining ingredients and simmer about 45 minutes or until vegetables are tender. The ratatouille is now ready to serve over brown rice or spooned into a soup bowl. You can also fill pre-baked pastry cups, wonton wrappers, or crepes.