

Managing the menopause without estrogen:

Testosterone

Low testosterone levels have been implicated in hypoactive sexual desire disorder/dysfunction (HSDD).

Testosterone in women

- Testosterone is produced by the ovaries and adrenal glands
- Testosterone is also produced by peripheral conversion of precursor steroids (androstenedione and dehydroepiandrosterone)
- Levels are lower in women than in men and fall with age
- The low levels mean that not all methods of measuring testosterone are reliable when used in women

Testosterone replacement in women

- Hypoactive sexual desire disorder/dysfunction (HSDD) after the menopause is the only evidence-based **indication**
- **Dosing** should achieve testosterone concentrations in the physiological premenopausal range

The only evidence-based indication for testosterone therapy for women is for the treatment of HSDD, with available data supporting a moderate therapeutic effect.

Testosterone preparations

- The availability of testosterone products varies worldwide
- Where an appropriate approved female testosterone preparation is not available, off-label prescribing of an approved male formulation is reasonable provided hormone concentrations are kept in the physiological female range
- Compounded 'bio-identical' testosterone therapy is not recommended due to the lack of evidence for efficacy and safety, unless an authorized equivalent preparation is not available
- If an approved product is unavailable and a compounded product is needed, the compounding pharmacy should meet regulatory standards

Monitoring

- **Total testosterone levels** should be measured before and 3–6 weeks after starting treatment
- **Clinical response** to treatment and total testosterone levels should be checked at 6 months
- If there is no **benefit** after 6 months, treatment should be stopped
- If there is benefit, **monitoring** should continue every 6–12 months

Further information

Davis et al. (2019). Global consensus position statement on the use of testosterone therapy for women <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2019.07.001>

Paschou et al. (2024). Sexual health and wellbeing and the menopause: an EMAS clinical guide <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2024.108055>