Do Men Go Through Menopause?

by AFRA WILLMORE

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The couple who run our local store is lovely, but like clockwork, the guy goes through grumpy phases. His wife has always said he has “man periods” following distinct cycles similar to hers.

She is deadly serious about it, and her gut feeling is backed up by at least one survey which found a quarter of British men believe they have a monthly “man period” with most of the symptoms of menstruation apart from the bleeding.

So, if this is an actual thing, it is not a huge leap of faith to believe some men may experience menopause too.

Some people equate male menopause with a midlife crisis – hands up if you have ever spotted a balding older man in a powerful sports car and thought his purchase might have been made during an insecure “male menopause moment.”

However, there are identifiable physical reasons why men might experience symptoms which are very similar superficially to the female menopause.

Men can experience an age-related drop in the male hormone, testosterone, for a number of reasons.

Doctors may diagnose testosterone deficiency, late-onset hypogonadism, or androgen deficiency/andropause – which is commonly referred to as male menopause.

What Is Testosterone?

Testosterone is a hormone produced in the testes. It instigates changes during puberty, fuels mental and physical energy, and sex drive. The hormone maintains muscle mass and regulates the fight-or-flight response.

A drop in testosterone levels may cause:

- Muscle loss
- Weight gain
- Sleep issues
- Loss of libido
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Decreased bone density
- Infertility

All sounds very similar to menopause, does not it?

Men affected may also experience:

- Low energy levels
- Difficulty concentrating
- Low self-esteem
- A loss of body hair
- Hot flashes

Nowhere near as many men experience a distinct male menopause as women do with female menopause, but those that do experience it can find symptoms significantly interfere with daily life.

Male testosterone levels drop through aging. It is believed the usual level is about 1-2 percent a year after about the age of 30.

However, for some men, the loss of testosterone can be more drastic and occur around the age of 40-50 years old – a similar age to when many women start the menopause process.

How Do You Know If Testosterone Levels Have Dropped?

Most men do not really notice their hormone levels changing, but for a few who do, the decline in testosterone can cause the symptoms mentioned earlier.

A simple blood test should provide conclusive proof that testosterone levels could be causing disruptive symptoms so arranging a visit to your doctor should be your first point of call.

There is no need to be embarrassed by the possibility of male menopause as a diagnosis – it is a genuine physical condition with symptoms which your doctor may be able to treat.

It is important to get a thorough health check if you notice completely different conditions may cause any changes in your mental state or body as the symptoms, and there’s a small chance a more serious illness may even cause them.

Is Male Menopause Treatable?

If you have read any articles about female menopause, you will know that although Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is a common treatment option, lifestyle changes can make the biggest difference to eliminating troubling symptoms.

The same advice applies to male menopause.

Men affected should try to identify and reduce stress, eat a healthy diet, ensure they get enough sleep, and regular exercise.

If you have a partner going through female menopause, this might be an excellent opportunity to team up. It is much easier to succeed with a healthy eating and exercise regime if you are sharing the ups and downs, supporting one another.

You could make this the time you finally take up that retirement hobby together, go for romantic evening walks or join an exercise class.

Exercising in itself can be helpful for tackling mild depression or feelings of sadness. Whether enjoyed indoors or out exercise releases mood-enhancing endorphins. As a bonus, you might find you sleep better at night too.

Your doctor may prescribe antidepressants or therapy if they think it is appropriate, depending on how male menopause manifests itself in your life.

Therapy might be beneficial in identifying stress trigger points and learning how to avoid them. It can also be useful in tackling any sexual problems, especially if anxiety plays a part.

There are hormone replacement therapies available for men, but the jury is out on the risk versus benefits argument.

There is some evidence that synthetic testosterone can carry damaging and potentially dangerous side effects. For instance, there is some evidence that in men with prostate cancer, male hormone replacement therapy can cause cancer cells to grow.

In some cases, it may be beneficial if other avenues have been explored and nothing else has helped. Discuss the pros and cons with a doctor who knows your health record before making a decision.