

Testosterone

Testosterone is an important female hormone. Healthy young women produce approximately 100 – 400 mcg per day. This represents three to four times the amount of Oestrogen produced by the ovaries.

Some of the effects are direct whereas some are due to peripheral conversion to Oestrogen. Testosterone levels naturally decline throughout a woman's lifespan. This loss of testosterone is particularly profound after iatrogenic i.e. surgical and medical menopause and premature ovarian insufficiency when testosterone production decreases by more than 50%.

A deficiency in testosterone can contribute to a reduction in general quality of life with women reporting fatigue, depression, headaches, cognitive problems, a decrease in muscle strength, a low libido and sexual dysfunction. After the menopause, Oestrogen levels also fall to undetectable levels. Consequently, the small amount of remaining testosterone may predispose to androgenic symptoms such as acne, increased facial hair growth and male pattern baldness.

Research has shown that giving testosterone subcutaneously i.e. across the skin may ease many of these symptoms but the effect can take many months and regularly checking testosterone levels is advised in most women.

Testosterone is usually given as a cream or gel (in the UK, it is available as AndroFeme®1 cream, Testogel® or Testim® gel) which you rub into your skin like a moisturiser, and it then becomes absorbed directly into your bloodstream. The AndroFeme®1 is made for women and is a regulated preparation. The Testogel and Testim gels are made for men but can be safely used in lower doses for women. This is called an 'off licence use' and will be discussed with you before it is prescribed. Your clinician will tell you how much to use. It should be rubbed onto clean, dry skin on your upper outer thigh or buttocks, it usually takes about 30 seconds to dry. You should wash your hands thoroughly after using it.

I do not fit testosterone implants and it is worth remembering that many NHS Doctors and clinics do not currently prescribe testosterone replacement for women for your treatment journey will be a private one.