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- *Prostate cancer survival odds best with surgery, study finds*
- *Sleep apnea linked to arteriosclerosis*
- *Acupuncture good for lower back pain*
- *Flu vaccine reduces complications, death in older adults*

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### Ask Dr. Lang

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- *Is muscle pain a side effect of statin drugs, and what should I do?*
- *What are heart palpitations, and when should I be concerned about them?*

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## Do You Need a Testosterone Boost?

*Despite concerns about overuse of hormone replacement therapy, recent studies affirm the need to treat men with low levels of testosterone*

**I**f you're an older man looking to restore lost vitality, testosterone therapy isn't the fountain of youth.

However, rising sales of testosterone products suggest that many healthy men may be using them unnecessarily without realizing the potential consequences. Testosterone therapy may enhance the growth of existing or undiagnosed prostate and breast cancers, contribute to benign prostate enlargement, cause fertility problems and, at high levels, adversely affect the cardiovascular system.

Yet, recent studies note the potential risks of low testosterone (hypogonadism).

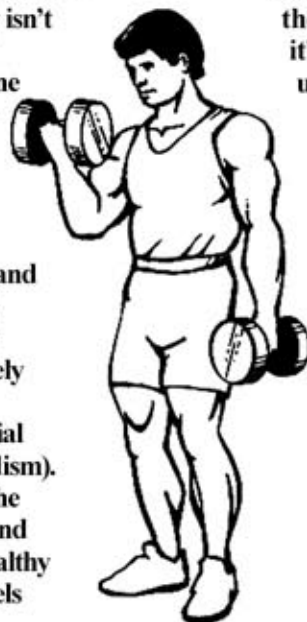
A study published this month in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* found that relatively healthy men with the lowest testosterone levels had a 40 percent greater risk of dying over the next 18 years than those with higher levels. Additionally, a study published in the Oct. 23, 2006, issue of the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that older men

- especially those ages 65-69 - with the lowest testosterone levels faced a 40 percent greater risk of falling, compared with those with the highest levels.

Supplemental testosterone isn't recommended for otherwise healthy men, but when used correctly, it's safe for most men with true hypogonadism, said Adi Mehta, MD, a Cleveland Clinic endocrinologist.

"Older men who feel that this is somehow going to stop them from aging, that's the wrong idea," he said. "When there's a clear cut testosterone deficiency, I think it's worth-

while treating it. If you're using therapeutic doses of testosterone, it's unlikely you're going to end up with deleterious effects."



Testosterone is an important male hormone, responsible for muscle and bone mass, among other things. Low testosterone may cause loss of muscle mass, decreased libido and sexual function, depression and impaired concentration. It also may contribute to a loss in bone mass (osteoporosis).

### PROBLEMS OF LOW TESTOSTERONE

Secreted by the testes (testicles), testosterone is an important male hormone, responsible for typical adult male attributes, muscle and bone mass and sex drive. Starting around age 40, a man's ability to produce testosterone gradually declines, but many older men still maintain normal testosterone levels - generally accepted as 300-1,220 nanograms per deciliter (ng/dL).

Hypogonadism may cause decreased libido and sexual function, fatigue, loss of muscle mass, depression and impaired concentration. It also may lead to a loss of bone mass

(osteoporosis), which raises your risk of fractures. Also, a study in the February 2007 issue of *Diabetes Care* suggested that low testosterone levels may be a risk factor for diabetes.

### DIAGNOSING HYPOGONADISM

Determining whether you have low testosterone and identifying the reason behind it begins with a detailed physical exam and medical history. Your doctor will ask you about your sexual function and your interest in sex, as well as any feelings of fatigue or muscle weakness.