

## Patient information

### Testosterone Replacement Therapy

Diabetes and Endocrinology Department

#### Why do I need this therapy?

Testosterone is a steroid hormone that circulates around the body via the bloodstream. It plays an important role in maintaining your general health and well-being. You need testosterone therapy when you cannot produce enough testosterone yourself.

This can happen if the testicles fail to respond to signals from the pituitary gland to produce testosterone or if you have a disorder of your pituitary gland, which prevents the signal being sent.

It can also happen if your testicles do not respond to the signals from the pituitary gland and so do not produce testosterone.

Both of these events cause a drop in the amount of testosterone your body produces. To correct this we need to give you replacement therapy.

#### What happens to me without enough testosterone?

Common symptoms are a loss of interest in sex, and difficulties with erections. You may notice you have less body hair than usual and you may find you have to shave less frequently. Skin texture may change and become smooth to touch.

There can also be a reduction in muscle strength and weight gain, especially around your middle. Tiredness and a general lack of energy are common; you may also feel very low in mood and have little interest in everyday life.

Over a long period of time your bones may gradually become thinner, this means they can break very easily.

#### How is the therapy given?

**Testosterone replacement can be given in a number of ways:**

- As a gel that can be applied once a day, either to your upper arms, abdomen or inner thigh. Each gel has a specific site of application.
- As an injection. There are two types of injections available: short-acting and long-acting. The practice nurse at your family doctor (GP) surgery would usually do this for you, once your treatment is established, as it is given into your muscle.

- Oral tablets are available but are not well absorbed and so are rarely used.

For every treatment preparation, your doctor, specialist or specialist nurse will check your blood level to make sure that the testosterone dose is right for you. If needed, the dose can be changed by them to suit your needs.

### **What are the side effects?**

- General side effects of testosterone are a possible increase in your haemoglobin level and a possible increase in the size of your prostate gland.
- If your haemoglobin increases, this can cause an increased risk of blood clots.
- If your prostate increases in size, this can cause problems for you when passing urine.
- We will check blood tests for both of these regularly whilst you are taking testosterone replacement therapy.
- The injection can cause pain at the site when it is given. Mood changes over the time period between injections can happen; you may start to feel low when your next injection is due.
- If you are being treated with the gel you may get some skin irritation at the site where it is rubbed in.
- There are contact safety precautions that should be taken when using testosterone gel replacement, these will be discussed with you prior to starting the gel and are also listed in the product information.

### **What happens to me when I am on the therapy?**

Your mood should improve considerably. You should have more interest in everyday life. You should regain an interest in sex and any problems with erection should go away. Body hair should return to normal, as should the frequency of shaving.

Body weight should return to normal and muscle strength should come back. Over a longer time your bones will have less risk of breaking.

### **What if I chose not to take the treatment?**

Without Testosterone you will continue to have the same symptoms that you were referred for. This may mean problems with sex drive and erections, sweating, tiredness and lethargy. You will also be at risk of developing osteoporosis (thinning of the bones)

### **What else should I know?**

Once you start treatment it is usually continued for life.

**This is intended as a general guide only. It is to supplement the information provided with your medication.**

**Please be sure to read carefully any information provided by your pharmacist.**

## Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

## Further Information

**Please feel free to contact the Endocrine Specialist Nurses with any questions you may have. There is an answer machine where you can leave your name and contact details. We will return all calls.**

**The Endocrinology Specialist Nurses**

**Tel: 0151 706 2417**

**Textphone number: 18001 0151 706 2417**

**Related Patient information leaflet:**

**Male Hypogonadism (PIF 1052)**

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