

## **Exercise — increase testosterone?** <sup>[1]</sup>

Alice,

Does exercise (i.e., weight lifting) increase testosterone levels?

— Working Out

### **Answer**

Dear Working Out,

Great question! Testosterone is a hormone present in males and females (though much less in females than in males). It is associated with male sexual development, energy levels, bone formation, sex drive, and mood regulation. It is also associated with muscle development and improved muscular performance, which is one of the reasons that some athletes take synthetic hormones.

There is a good deal of research exploring the link between exercise and testosterone. For example, one study found that regular physical exercise in females (ten or more hours a week) helped to increase testosterone levels while lowering body mass index. And, it's probably no surprise to learn that it's possible to do just the opposite with too much exercise. Several studies show lower testosterone levels in some endurance athletes. If you are such an athlete, or are experiencing symptoms of low testosterone — low sexual function or desire, sleep disturbances, reduced muscle bulk, depressed mood — you may want to consult your health care provider.

Some suggestions to give your testosterone a boost through exercise:

- Include exercises in your routine which work large muscle groups (bench press, back rows, squats).
- Some training days should include heavier weights, even if it means cutting down on the number of times (reps) you can lift this weight.
- Make sure your workout includes at least three sets of each exercise.
- Give your body at least one day (preferably two) to rest and recover before working the same muscle group again.
- Fuel your body with adequate food to support your workouts.

If weight training and terms like "rep" and "set" are new to you, check out [Weight training: Do I need to change my workout to see results?](#) [2] and many other Q&As in the *Go Ask Alice! Nutrition and Physical Activity* [3] archives. Also, keep in mind that, depending on your reasons for wanting to increase or decrease testosterone levels, there may be more than one option for doing so. You might also consider talking to your health care provider to determine the best course of action.

Alice!

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