

**AGING**  
*with an Attitude*

# Andropause - is it real?



By Dorie U. Sugay

Dorie Sugay is the Executive Director of Visiting Angels, a company that provides living-assistance services to seniors and adults-in-need who wish to stay in their own home or receive one-on-one care within a facility.

This article is for informational and educational purposes only. It was written independent of Visiting Angels.

At the Crab Cioppino and Shrimp Feed fundraiser that the IFDES (Portuguese Community) holds every year, I had the privilege of sitting with two very interesting couples. Don't ask me how we started talking about andropause, but we did. Immediately, "Joe" started to amuse us with his interpretation of what it is. As we laughed with him (while we feasted on mouth-watering crab), I decided to write about it — after all, I need to assure "Joe" that he won't one day wake up and want to use his lady's "female stuff."

Andropause — is it myth or reality? I asked a few men what they know about it. Many preferred to avoid the subject. For some, andropause can not happen — "men don't have wombs" after all. Indeed they don't — but the relationship between ovaries, estrogen, the brain and the pituitary are exactly the same relationship between the testis, testosterone, the brain and the pituitary! Yup, it's real, it "visits" a man between 40 and 70 years of age, and just like menopause, how long it will stay, nobody knows. A friend of mine says he has dealt with it since he was 42. He is now almost 60.

Hormonal changes are part of life. But unlike the dramatic plunge of hormones that occur in women during menopause, sex hormone changes in men occur gradually and over a period of years. Changes in sexual function, energy level or mood tend to be more subtle and might even be ignored for years, easily explained away with three words: "it's just stress."

Some men have a lower than normal testosterone level without signs or symptoms, but experts say that on average, testosterone levels decline one percent a year after age 30. And when those testosterone levels drop, men are vulnerable to a list of challenges: compromised sexual function and/or sleep patterns (insomnia, increased sleepiness), physical changes (reduced muscle bulk, strength and endurance, decreased bone density, hair

loss, less energy, unexplained weight gain, hot flashes, occasional palpitations, etc.); emotional imbalance (decrease in motivation, self-confidence, irritability, unexplained sadness or depression, trouble concentrating or remembering things).

In "The Andropause Mystery: Unraveling the Truths about the Male Menopause," Dr. R. Tan talks about that which women long to hear — that the decrease of testosterone makes andropausal men likely to be more in touch with their feminine side. They seem more family-oriented — seeing more value in bonding with their children, becoming more involved in domestic issues, and in some cases even seeming more gentle (well, until their testosterone level spikes with no set schedule and they get grumpy, that is).

**Yup, it's real, it "visits" a man between 40 and 70 years of age, and just like menopause, how long it will stay, nobody knows.**

So if a man experiences these symptoms does it necessarily suggest andropause? Not necessarily. These can be side effects of certain medications, of thyroid problems, chronic depression or excessive alcohol use. The only way to find out what's what is to consult with a doctor and get a blood test. (The doctor may conduct tests for a period of time since levels vary from day to day).

It is an easy bet that we won't find too many men too eager to admit they are experiencing a drop in libido or that they are having hot flashes. And of course, they never have mood swings — they "experience irritability due to stress." But — the sooner symptoms are "confronted" the sooner something can be done. Treatment can increase libido and sexual functioning, bring back a sense of well-being, prevent osteoporosis, restore muscle strength and improve mental

functions. If you wish to help the man you love, tread lightly — this subject is touchy.

In the meantime, is there anything one can do? Symptoms are our body's way of saying it needs the right attention. The right attention in this case is from a physician, but there are things men can do to help the situation. Some experts suggest that a cardiorespiratory endurance training appropriate to a person's age and physical condition helps promote higher serum-testosterone levels and improve one's mood. Resistance training helps regain physical strength. Some nutritionists suggest that ingesting foods high in protein and low in carbs promote higher testosterone levels and promote muscle

mass. For those feeling fatigued or having mood swings, Vitamin B complex helps. Experts recommend a diet high in amino acids — carrots, lettuce, spinach, cucumbers, raspberries, oranges, grapes, papaya, and onions.

Andropausal symptoms, like many other things we deal with as we age, is nature's way of saying we need to adjust our sails as we cruise through life. Menopause and andropause ...no one is exempt from it. You can let your sail flap in the wind and slap you to the ground... you can let your sailboat toss about and watch those you love thrown about (and trust me, when you struggle, they do too), or you can take control and have a say in how aging affects you and your body!

**Sources:**

- Andropause — Wikipedia
- How to Assist a Man with Andropause — Clayton Yuetter eHow.com
- Herbs to Treat Andropause — Allison Westbrook, eHow.com
- Andropause — www.midlife-passages.com/hormone.htm
- A Guide to Andropause Treatment — Dan Ho ezinearticles
- "The Andropause Mystery: Unraveling the Truths about the Male Menopause". Robert S. Tan



## THE MILIAS RESTAURANT

*Take a step back and dine.*

**Sunday Brunch**  
*(9:30 am - 2 pm)*

**Lunch**  
*(11:30 am - 2 pm Tues-Sat)*

**Dinner**  
*(5 pm - 10 pm Tues-Sun)*

- Steaks
- Seafood
- Fine Cocktails

Like us on facebook for a live music schedule

**themiliasrestaurant.com**

7397 Monterey Street • Gilroy, CA 95020 • 408.337.5100