

How to use exercise to boost testosterone and balance hormones



Feeling off but can't put your finger on why? Maybe your energy's dropped. You're not sleeping well. You've lost the drive to train. Or maybe you just feel a bit slower, flatter, or heavier than usual.

It's easy to put this down to stress or getting older and sometimes it is. But often, **hormones are involved**. For men, **testosterone plays a big part in how your body and brain function**. If it drops, even slightly, you'll likely feel it.

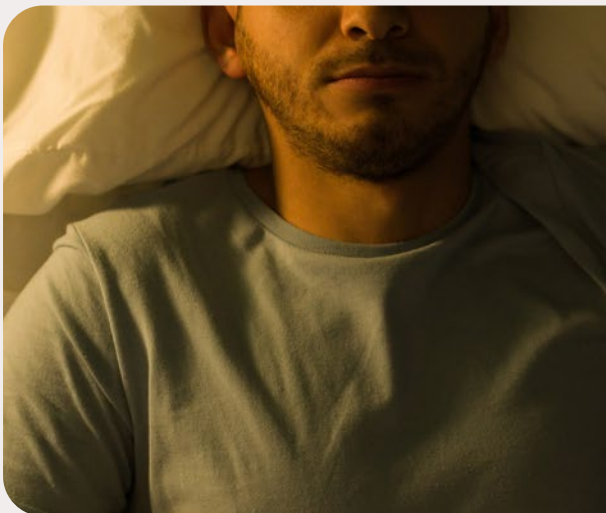
But here's the thing, it's not all downhill. **Regular movement can help get your hormones back on side**. Not just testosterone, but other hormones too, like cortisol, insulin and growth hormone. This guide will show you how. From the right kind of strength training to rest and recovery, we'll walk through how to move, lift, and live in a way that supports how you feel.

Why hormones matter for men

Hormones control a lot more than you might realise. They're not just about muscle or sex drive, they also affect your mood, energy, sleep, motivation, and even where your body stores fat. When they're working well, you'll feel it. You've got more energy, better focus, and you recover faster from stress or training. When they're not? Things can feel sluggish, flat, and harder than they should.

Testosterone is one of the big ones for men. It's made in the testicles and supports everything from strength and stamina to sex drive and sperm health. **But from your early 30s, levels start to dip.** Slowly at first, then more as the years go on.

That's a normal part of ageing. But some things can speed up that decline. Men who carry extra weight, especially around the belly, are more likely to have lower testosterone. **Conditions like type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome can also pull levels down faster.** Certain long-term medications, like opioids, are linked too. As rising BMI becomes more common, more men are starting to notice the effects of testosterone dropping earlier and faster than expected.



If testosterone drops too far, you might notice:

- You're more tired than usual
- It's harder to gain or keep muscle
- Your body's storing more fat, especially around the belly
- Your mood's lower, or you feel more irritable
- You've lost interest in sex
- You're struggling to sleep well

But testosterone isn't the only thing to think about.

Cortisol, your stress hormone, can stay high if you're always busy, not sleeping, or overtraining. That can interfere with testosterone and make everything feel harder. **Insulin helps manage blood sugar,** and if it's out of balance, it can lead to fat gain and tiredness. **Growth hormone helps repair muscle,** boost recovery, and keep your metabolism ticking over.

Simply put, your hormones work together to help you feel your best. And one of the easiest ways to support them is to **move your body the right way.**



How strength training supports testosterone

If there's one type of exercise that really supports testosterone, it's **strength training**. When you challenge your muscles, especially the bigger ones like your legs, chest, and back, your body responds by increasing testosterone to help with repair and growth. **It's one of the simplest and most effective ways to give your hormones a lift.**

You don't need to lift heavy weights in a packed gym to get results. You can use your own bodyweight. Things like squats, push-ups, lunges, and rows are more than enough to start with, what matters is effort. Working hard enough that your body knows it needs to adapt and giving yourself time to rest between sessions.

Here's how to make your strength training work for your hormones:

- **Train 2 to 3 times a week.** Focus on full-body workouts to hit all the major muscle groups.
- **Use compound moves.** These are exercises that work more than one muscle at a time. Think squats, deadlifts, and push-ups.
- **Keep it short and sharp.** Around 30–45 minutes per session is plenty.
- **Take recovery seriously.** Rest at least one full day between sessions to let your body rebuild.

Training too often or too intensely without recovery can backfire. It can raise stress hormones and actually lower testosterone. So don't ignore rest, it's where the real gains happen.

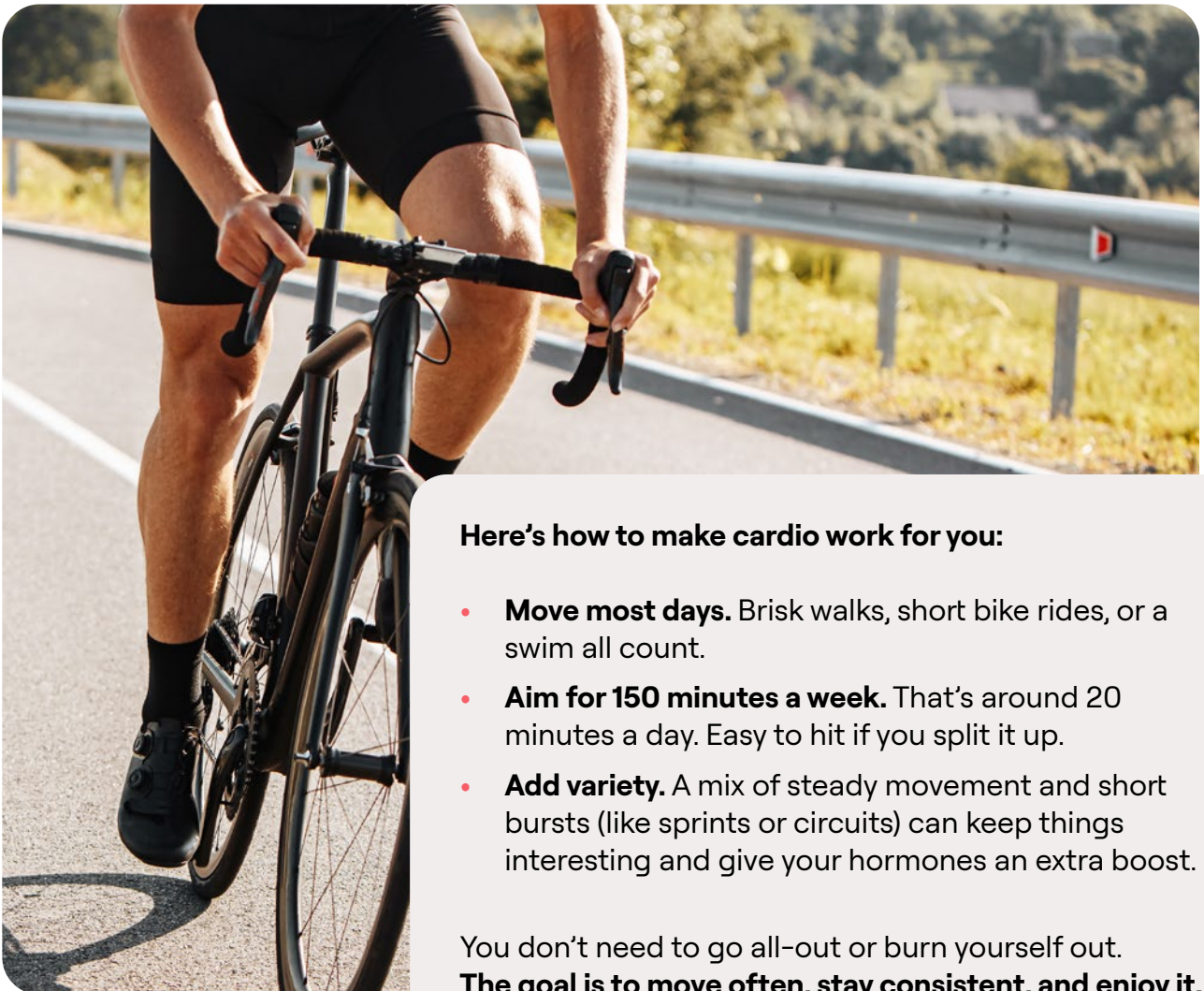
The impact of cardio on hormones and mood

Cardio does more than just get your heart rate up or help with fat loss. **It plays a big part in how you manage stress, mood, and blood sugar**, all of which link back to your hormones.

When you move, especially at a steady pace like walking, cycling, or swimming, **your brain releases endorphins**. These are the chemicals that help you feel calm, clear-headed, and more relaxed. Regular cardio also helps bring down cortisol, the hormone that shoots up when you're stressed or under pressure.

High cortisol can mess with testosterone over time. So, keeping stress in check through movement is one of the best things you can do for hormonal balance.

Cardio also helps with insulin, the hormone that controls blood sugar. If insulin gets out of whack (often from being inactive or eating too much sugar), it can lead to weight gain and make your hormones harder to manage.



Here's how to make cardio work for you:

- **Move most days.** Brisk walks, short bike rides, or a swim all count.
- **Aim for 150 minutes a week.** That's around 20 minutes a day. Easy to hit if you split it up.
- **Add variety.** A mix of steady movement and short bursts (like sprints or circuits) can keep things interesting and give your hormones an extra boost.

You don't need to go all-out or burn yourself out.
The goal is to move often, stay consistent, and enjoy it.

Why recovery is just as important

Training gets all the attention, **but rest is where the real progress happens.** Your muscles don't grow while you're working out, they grow after. That's when your body repairs damage, rebuilds stronger, and resets your hormones.

If you skip recovery, it catches up with you fast. You start feeling wiped out. Your sleep gets patchy. Cortisol creeps up and testosterone takes a hit. You might even find your workouts stop working the way they used to.

The fix? **Don't just train hard, recover well too.**



Here's how to keep your recovery on point:

- **Sleep properly.** Aim for 7 to 9 hours a night. It's one of the best ways to support your hormones and your results.
- **Take proper rest days.** Training every day without a break can wear you down. Rest gives your body time to rebuild.
- **Drink enough water.** Even mild dehydration makes recovery slower and leaves you feeling flat.
- **Keep things moving, gently.** On your off days, try walking, stretching, or some easy yoga to boost blood flow and reduce tightness.

Recovery isn't lazy. It's smart. If you want to feel better, get stronger, and keep your hormones steady, rest needs to be part of the plan.

Other ways exercise supports hormone health

- Testosterone gets most of the spotlight, but it's only part of the picture. Your body runs on a whole network of hormones and **regular movement helps keep all of them in check.**
- It's not just about building muscle or burning fat. It's about **helping your body function properly day in, day out** so you've got the energy, focus, and drive to feel like yourself again.



Here's how exercise supports the full hormonal mix:

- **Insulin** – Movement helps your muscles soak up sugar from your blood. That keeps your blood sugar stable and lowers the risk of insulin resistance, which can lead to weight gain and fatigue.
- **Growth hormone** – Released during strength training and short, intense cardio. It helps with muscle repair, fat use, and recovery.
- **Endorphins and dopamine** – These brain chemicals boost your mood, sharpen your focus, and help reduce stress. They're part of why you often feel better after you move.
- **Oestrogen and progesterone** – Men have these hormones too, just in smaller amounts. They support bone strength, libido, and mood and need to stay balanced.
- **Thyroid hormones** – These control your metabolism. Moving your body helps your thyroid stay active, which keeps your energy levels more stable.

Simply put, **regular movement keeps your hormone system running smoothly.** It's not about smashing every session, it's about **staying consistent and giving your body what it needs to work well.**



When exercise might work against your hormones

More isn't always better, **especially when it comes to training and hormones**. Moving your body regularly is great. But if you're pushing too hard, too often, and not giving yourself time to recover, it can start to backfire.

This is where cortisol creeps in. It's your stress hormone. And when it stays high, whether from lack of sleep, constant pressure, or overtraining, it can start dragging testosterone down. That's when progress slows, energy dips, and you just feel off.

Here are some signs you might be overdoing it:

- You feel wiped out, even after resting
- You're struggling to sleep
- Your mood's all over the place or motivation's vanished
- Muscles or joints are sore all the time
- You're not getting stronger, or you're going backwards

This doesn't mean you should stop training. **It just means balance matters**. Train hard but also rest hard. Eat enough to fuel your workouts and recovery, especially if you're doing strength or high-intensity sessions. Skipping meals or cutting calories too low can mess with your hormone levels just as much as overtraining.

The sweet spot is where you're moving often, recovering well, and feeling good in your body, not drained by it.

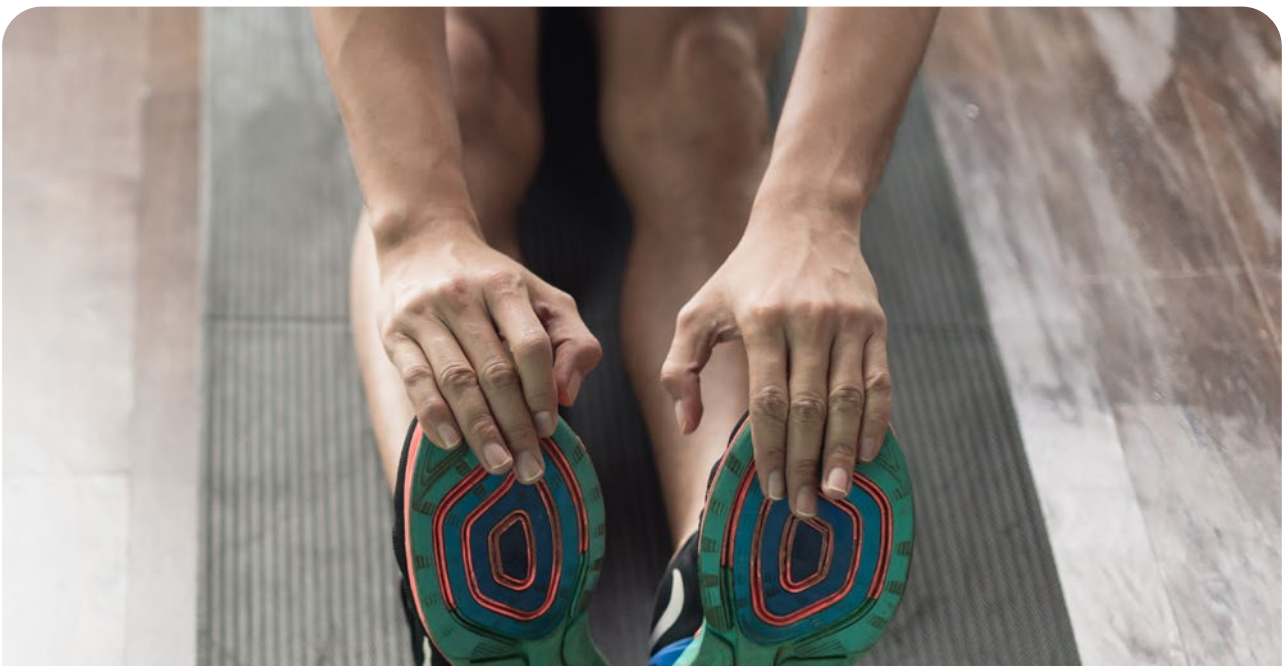
How to build a routine that works for you

There's no one-size-fits-all plan when it comes to hormones, fitness, or health. What works best is **something you can stick with without burning out or losing motivation after a week.**

The goal isn't to be perfect. It's to build a routine that supports your energy, helps you feel better, and fits around real life.

Here's a simple weekly setup that works for most people:

- **2 to 3 days of strength training** – Use weights if you have them, or your own bodyweight if you don't. Focus on big moves like squats, push-ups, and rows.
- **2 to 3 days of cardio** – Walk, jog, cycle, swim. Whatever gets your heart rate up and feels good on your joints.
- **1 to 2 rest days** – Recovery is key. Use these days to stretch, go for a gentle walk, or do some light mobility work.
- **Daily movement** – This is where the magic happens. Get up and move throughout the day. Take the stairs. Walk after meals. It all adds up.



Set small goals that are easy to win. Try ***"I'll train twice this week"*** or ***"I'll walk 20 minutes each day."*** Then build from there. You don't need to overhaul your whole life, just start with what you can do now.

The more consistent you are, the more your hormones and the rest of your body will thank you for it.

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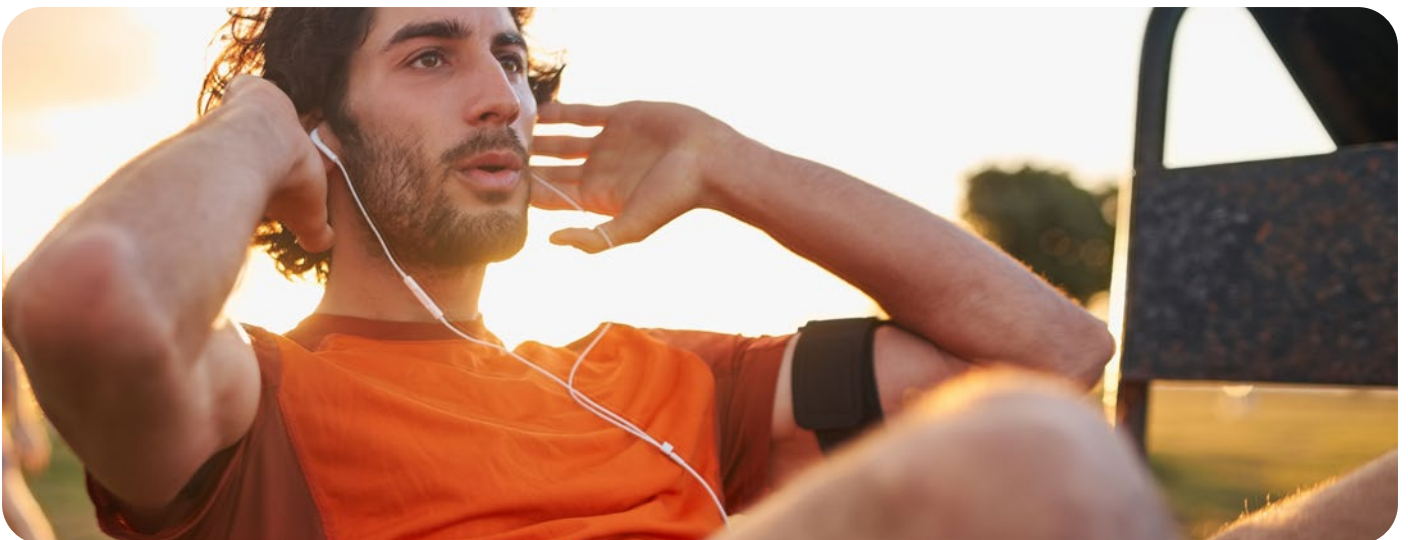
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If your body's not feeling right, you don't have to guess why. Speak to a **HealthHero GP and get the support you need to feel steady, strong, and back on track.**