Obese Boys Have Lower Testosterone, Higher Risks of Impotency

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Testosterone is essential to a man's overall physical and sexual vitality. That's why there's cause for concern over findings that show obese male teens have a significantly lower amount of the male hormone, according to a recent report published in Clinical Endocrinology.

For the study, researchers from the University at Buffalo's School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (UB) in New York tested 25 obese and 25 lean males, ages 14 to 20, who had the same level of sexual maturity. Both groups of boys were healthy and had no history of diabetes.

Findings revealed that the obese male teens had up to 50 percent less testosterone than the lean boys. "The implications of our findings are, frankly, horrendous because these boys are potentially impotent and infertile," said Paresh Dandona, MD, PhD, chief of UB's division of endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism.

In addition to causing possible reproductive problems, low testosterone levels could also boost the boys' tendency to develop abdominal fat and lose muscle. (Both can lead to insulin resistance, a condition that contributes to diabetes.)

But, according to Dandona, these problems can be treated with simple interventions. "It's possible that [testosterone] levels also will return to normal through weight loss as a result of lifestyle change, although this needs to be confirmed by larger studies."

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