This is a Test

August 29, 2012 By Aundaray Guess

As a person who always went to the gym on a regular basis, every so often I would get a flattering remark on how I looked. It was nice to know the workouts were paying off but getting compliments wasn't my primary reason for going. As someone who occasionally had issues with anxiety, going to the gym was a great way for me to relax and find my center. I could always tell when I missed too many days at the gym as the feelings of having too much to do and little time to do it would wash over me.

I want to say that my muscle gain came all from my heavy exercising but there's also a little bit of help that I get that I don't readily let people know. My little secret called Testosterone comes in a small vial and involves a bi-weekly injection and is part of my regular regime of staying healthy. Some may ask how is having muscles helping with health but the truth is Testosterone for me was not for vanity but to restore a natural hormone that my body stopped producing.

I discovered this during a time when my energy was flatline. It seemed like to do anything took effort. Initially I thought perhaps it was depression based on the mood I was exhibiting. But unlike feelings of depression I wasn't sad or felt down. I just didn't want to do anything that involved using my strength. I would go to the gym and where once I would be rejuvenated I now had the feeling of 'why am I lifting this weight up and down?' Another thing was that my sex drive was doing 5 in a 55 mile per hour lane. When it came to sex I just didn't have any desire for it. And this was when I was in my thirties, still in my peak. Were my glory years coming before I was ready for it? What was going on? And add to that my growing irritability and I become a person that I didn't even want to be around.

It was during one of my regular scheduled appointments when I was checking in and telling the doctor how I felt that he decided to test my testosterone levels. At the time I didn't know too much about testosterone. I just knew that it put hair on your chest and bass in your voice. I was never good in biology. He assured me it was much more than that and it was important to check it. So after drawing blood and getting back the results I was told it was way below average. Oh crap I guess not going to the gym was now coming back to bite me. But in fact that was not the case as the gym didn't have anything to do with it.

The truth was that diminished levels of testosterone are common in HIV+ men. The incidence of low testosterone increases in men who have lived long-term with HIV. To compound the problem, it's normal for the body to slow production of testosterone after the age of 40 regardless of HIV status. As I was officially a long termer it made sense that what I was experiencing was associated with my levels.

So even though 40 is the benchmark, when it came to HIV you could be much younger and

not be aware that your body has slowed down the testosterone factory line. It’s even harder to know as there’s no physical fuel gauge that you can let you know you that you’re running on a quarter tank.

I was offered several ways of replacing my levels- either by an injection, a patch or gel. Since the shot meant I would have to visit the doctor every two weeks I went with the easy solution; the gel. It was no doubt easy but I always felt like nothing was changing. Plus I didn’t like it leaving a mess on my clothes. Yes I’m fussy like that. The patch was also a no go as it seemed to have nil effect and there was the embarrassment of having this thing clung to your leg as your changing into your workout clothes in the gym locker room. So the shots were the best solution. But it was good to know there was more than one option and just because one thing may not work there may be another route.

Anyone getting treated for low testosterone will use a different technique but one thing that may be similar is what I call the roller coaster effect. When you initially get the shot you get this energy boost as if you could lift the world. After getting my shot I knew what Popeye felt like when he slammed down that can of spinach to protect Olive Oil. But then that feeling slowly subsides and you get back to your regular self. By that I mean the life I had before where I was energetic and frisky, it all came back from the darkness. I was truly myself again.

With the doctors help I now administer the shots myself. And I’m glad that I shared with my doctor as I thought I was going crazy. Like I said in the beginning yeah there are some benefits if you work out regularly but after managing this disease for so many years I’m not going to knock any benefits I can get from it. Here’s to a better and fitter me.

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