

Thinking of Hormone Replacement Therapy?

Contributed by Jim Andrea
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Have you ever wanted to try a cycle of hormone replacement therapy? You know, those little ads in the back of men's magazines that advertise doctor-prescribed steroids. I suppose it's just like asking if you've ever wanted to juice. For most serious weightlifters the answer to the question is "Yes, I've thought about it". And for most of those same guys, they chicken out. Or they decide it's just too much of a risk to their health. Or maybe they're afraid of getting caught by law enforcement. Maybe they're worried about getting screwed by the dealer -- getting fake gear, or just plain ripped off.

I've been lifting weights since I was fourteen years old and always wanted to try steroids. I knew the day would come when I'd give them a shot. I am not the kind of person who is afraid to try something new. And so I did. At the age of eighteen, as a high school senior, I did a six week steroid cycle. I loved it. I did another one the following summer. That was it. I never took them again, but I never forgot how good I looked and felt when I was juiced.

Keep in mind I am not your average juicer. In fact, I sometimes wonder if I'm the only guy reading MD who can't bench press three-hundred pounds! I'm six feet tall and at the young age of eighteen I was a lean 165 pounds. Yes, I'm thin. Normal, I guess. I lifted weights as hard as anyone in my high school and I was ripped. But I was surely not big. I didn't bench two plates the first time I stepped in a weight room. In fact, I couldn't do one! I looked more like a runner than a weightlifter. I'm a classic ectomorph. With a shirt on you wouldn't know I lifted. I wanted to grow. Fuck the eating. Fuck the power lifting. I wanted the juice!

I remember there was a kid who lived in my town that took ‘roids. Everyone knew it. He never tried to keep it quiet. He was older than I was -- out of high school already.

One day I was sitting in the lobby of the school waiting on a buddy when "steroid guy" walked into the school. He was alone and so was I. He walked into the locker room to weigh himself for a power lifting meet he was involved with. I followed him down the stairs and asked quite bluntly, "I heard you can get steroids. Is that true?"

"I can get you anything you want" he said.

"I want steroids". That was how it happened.

This was 1988 and the internet didn't exist at the time. There was no such book as ANABOLICS 1988 in stores either. Steroid information was hard to come by back then and I was young. I didn't know about post cycle therapy, dosages, esters, anti-estrogens -- nothing!

He sold me some Dianabol tablets and Nandrolone injections in the little 2 CC vials they used to come in. I can remember opening the bottles of Dbol and smelling the inside. It had a nice aroma to it that still sticks in my mind today. I pyramided 15-30 mg/day of the Dbol and did a 2 CC shot of Deca per week for six weeks. I gained some weight, got a little stronger. I remember being absolutely shredded. My arms got big. I never wore sleeves.

Nothing bad ever really happened to me from the two little cycles I did, but fifteen or so years later, at the age of 35, I strangely and suddenly felt the urge once again.

I was flipping through a Muscular Development magazine in my apartment and saw an advertisement for a "health and rejuvenation clinic". It was the first time I had ever seen something like this before. I was intrigued. A little cartoon of a musclehead next to a laundry list of legal steroids -- test, deca, winstrol, hgh -- I had to call. I'm a skeptic by nature and a stickler for reading the "small print", but this ad looked legit. Was it going to be too expensive? Maybe I was too young to qualify. I'll bet there's a catch. Give me the phone!

When I dialed the 800# I was brought to some prompts with an automated advertisement for the clinic. They were located in Florida and promised a legal prescription from an American physician for pharmaceutical anabolics. I wanted to try the testosterone cream.

The last time I cycled I was probably 19 years old. A guy at the gym had advised me that I could do my injections in my legs. I was having trouble finding someone to do the rear end injections, so I wanted to find another place to shoot myself that was easier to access than my ass. My brother is a diabetic and he had a book that explained the various injection sites diabetics can use. Of course, this was for subcutaneous injections, not intra-muscular. But I didn't even know the difference. It's amazing how much more information there is available today than there was back then. Steroid users have a wealth of educational resources available to them to fully inform themselves about all aspects of this hugely important decision. In the '80's you found out all about your gear from the guys at the gym who were using gear themselves, and possibly selling it as well. If they were misinformed, then you became misinformed. And the medical community had no interest in helping out young men who wanted to try a cycle or two with a relative degree of safety. We were on our own.

My own father is a physician and I remember him telling me that anabolic steroids didn't work. I knew he was full of shit. I had seen Lou Ferrigno, and Arnold, and Zane, and Albert Beckles. They worked.

My friend at the gym advised me that he was injecting himself on his inner thighs (yes, inner) and so that is what I started to do as well. It worked fine the first couple times. Then I hit a vein, and I injected anyway. I remember the blood swimming inside the syringe amongst all the oil, creating a cloudy red contrast. When I sank the plunger and injected the fluid a strong burning sensation ran quickly down the inside of my leg and back up the other side. It was the strangest, most discomforting sensation I have ever experienced. I was terrified. I didn't know if I was going to die or have a stroke or what. Nothing happened, thankfully. But that was the last steroid injection I ever took. I wasn't some fucked up druggie. I was an athlete! A good student. I was in shape. I partied as much as any other teenager does, but I was a very well adjusted kid. I had no intentions of dying from some freak steroid accident. No fucking way.

That's why at age 35 I was talking to an anti-aging clinic about testosterone cream, not testosterone injections. I'm really not too much of a pussy to inject myself, but I never forgot that feeling of thinking I might die because I didn't know what the fuck I was doing.

These days on the message boards all the gear heads will tell you that you have to shoot at least 500mg of test per week or you shouldn't bother juicing at all. They're wrong. Those guys can speak for themselves, but not for me. I'm not going to ever be competing on stage in Las Vegas. I currently weigh 185. I bench 250. I'm fairly cut, but nobody is running away from me. In other words, I'm normal. Maybe just like you. I was just looking for something to give me a little edge. Something to amp up my energy and make me feel less lethargic. Ease some of my aches and pains. Maybe get me a little stronger, a little more ripped. Give me some extra wood up front when I want it. I got what I wanted.

Within a week I was driving around Brockton, MA looking for the clinic where I had an appointment to get blood drawn. I paid \$250 with a credit card over the phone and the Florida clinic had set up the blood lab for me just a few miles from where I lived. They drew my blood and ran the appropriate tests, sending the results directly to the clinic in Florida -- no questions asked. Within a couple days a Fed-Ex box was at my apartment door. I opened it up with the excitement of a kid on Christmas morning. That's such a hackneyed expression, but it was apropos for this situation. Inside was a tube of testosterone cream -- a clear cylinder filled with white cream. My name was typed right on the label. It was wrapped in bubble-wrap and came along with a little prescription bottle of Nolvadex tablets to prevent any gyno. It was all so easy, it seemed surreal. I kept peaking out my window as if someone outside might be watching me. The whole process certainly was not cheap. It had cost me about \$600 after all was said and done. But it was legal. It was real pharmaceutical gear. And it was delivered right to my house. I wasn't 19 anymore and I wasn't going to risk getting bogus gear, or ripped off, or arrested. The money was worth not having to buy off the internet from some clown who can't even speak English properly. Using hormones is risky enough.

I had grilled the guy on the phone from the clinic extensively about what to expect, and how to proceed. He made me feel pretty comfortable. This was easy, he assured me. And it was. The range for a patient to be "prescribable" was wide. He even offered to refund all my money if the doctor determined my natural testosterone level to be too high for hormone replacement therapy (HRT). I've always enjoyed getting packages in the mail, but this one made me downright giddy.

The first thing I did was shave a little area in my groin, at the very top of the inside of my leg, right next to my scrotum. I shaved it clean and was to use that area to apply a small, measured amount of the testosterone cream every day after I showered in the morning. The thin skin of the scrotum is apparently good for absorption.

The cream has exactly the same look and texture as hand cream, and it absorbs quickly into the bloodstream. Within six to eight hours the body's testosterone levels are markedly elevated. No pills. No injections. No sweat.

The tube I had was 200 mg/ml. I applied one ml per day, and the absorption rate is approximately 10-15%. I would be getting around 20 mg per day of test. 140 mg per week. Not a heavy cycle by any standards.

My main concern was that 140 mg/week would do little more than shut down my own natural test production while providing few benefits. I must say, though, that this was not the case. Although it was nowhere near the "joy ride" of a strong injectable testosterone cycle, the side effects were fairly minimal and very tolerable. And I did feel damn good.

The first thing I noticed was my energy levels increasing. I worked at a desk job at the time and lifted weights after work. I often struggled to get to the gym after I got home. I would be tired and hungry and wanted to just eat and watch the tube. Sound familiar? But after using the cream I noticed a measurable increase in my energy levels. I had no problem going to the gym after work. I looked forward to it! And my workouts were excellent. I didn't feel like I was going through the motions. Some of it may have been psychological -- I knew I was taking something and I wanted to maximize the gain. And that's fine. As long as my workouts improved, it didn't really matter why, right?

I was also stronger. Although it was nowhere near the increase that one would attain from a "real" cycle -- say a typical test/anadrol type cycle -- the strength increase was still there, and it felt really good. I had really maxed out my natural strength gains sometime back, and for the first time in a long time I was seeing tangible increases in my strength. My bench went up 20-25 pounds. I was doing dumbbell curls with 10 pounds more per arm. Again, not going to shock anyone, but this was really not a "steroid cycle". It was intended to be for long term use with limited deleterious health effects. Believe me, if I wanted to explode with size and strength and vascularity I'd order up a bunch of test and tren and throw in some Dbol and eq with it. But I'd also have to deal with far more serious sides. As good as it gets, is as bad as it will get. I just wanted a little edge. It seemed to be working nicely so far.

Another nice benefit was the way my body felt. After having played many sports throughout the years, and pounding my joints and muscles with weight training, I had a lot of nagging aches and pains. My wrists ached when I benched. My shoulder was chronically painful. My knees were a fuckin' mess. But the increase in testosterone seemed to make my sore joints feel better. I didn't hurt as badly. It was a nice little bonus.

Although I never had very much fat on my body, at the age of 35 I did have something around the mid-riff. Years of beer drinking had finally given me a small belly, not bad, but my six-pack wasn't as apparent as it once was. However a few weeks into my cycle of HRT whatever fat I did have on my body seemed to disappear. This may not have happened as much for a really overweight guy, but I was fairly lean to begin with. Now I was looking ripped. The first time I really noticed this was one night when I came home from the barroom, half in the wrapper. I took my shirt off to wash up before bed and as I was walking past a mirror I saw my reflection and did a double-take. Holy shit! I was cut. I must've spent ten minutes flexing. My six-pack was back. And my triceps -- always my best muscle group -- were fucking awesome.

Then there's sex. Anyone who has ever taken testosterone knows the profound effects it has on your sexuality. I would wake up with raging hard-ons. And I could hardly get enough of "it". Whatever "it" was. One example was Whitney -- a girl who sat next to me at work, one cubicle over. She was a little package of Italian dynamite. Tiny little thing, built like a fighter -- all muscle. She was a hundred-and-five pound Viagra tablet! Dark skin, pitch black hair, dark eyes, pearly white teeth. Whitney was extremely lean and shapely as hell. I wanted to bone her in the worst of ways, and that was before the testosterone. A week into using the cream I would sit at my desk sporting a piece of wood in the front of my pants that would rival any high school kid in America. All day long she was right there for me to look at. It was torture! Whitney was married, so I never did make a move. But in my fantasies, that didn't matter. I got zero work accomplished during that time. It was a return to adolescence, in a really good way.

My testosterone levels were in the five-hundred range when I originally got tested, so I wasn't really on the low-end of normal by any means. And I'm not sure how high it went when I was using the cream, but post-cycle therapy was pretty simple. I never took HCG, although the clinic would have sold it to me if I had desired. I just took some Clomid and Nolvadex for a couple weeks. My natural test felt like it bounced back almost immediately after discontinuing the cream.

In fact, it felt pretty good coming off the cream. I didn't feel any type of post-cycle crash the way you do after using steroids. Anyone who has juiced knows how fucking depressing a post-cycle crash can be. It sucks! Overall, the whole experience was quite positive in nearly every way.

There were drawbacks to the experience, however. I cannot deny that. I'm not here on behalf of any clinics to try to sell the public on HRT. I am also not going to bullshit anyone by saying it was a mistake and that I regret it either. But any drug that works is going to have some kind of side effects.

Firstly, and most notably, my testicles shrank! Everyone knows that steroids can make your balls shrink. And yes, they do return to normal size upon discontinuation of the drugs in most cases. But my balls shrank. They just kept getting smaller and smaller over the course of the sixty days that I used the cream. It sucked. There is nothing that will make a man feel less secure than to see any part of his genitalia shrinking on a daily basis. Especially when he knows that he is causing it to happen by his own actions. It bothered me quite a bit, and if you can't deal with having small nuts, then don't take any testosterone.

Again, within a couple weeks my gonads made a welcomed resurgence after cessation of the test cream. They were completely normal again after about four weeks or so, I would say. But it can most certainly be disconcerting to experience this side effect. And it will happen.

Also I noticed my hair started receding at an alarming rate. If you're not predisposed to male pattern baldness, good for you. But I am. If you are too, you need to know that testosterone cream will speed your hair loss up at a rapid pace. Even though the dosages are fairly conservative, the cream does greatly affect certain areas of the body, including the scalp, and it has a strong propensity to exacerbate baldness. If this bothers you, don't take testosterone cream.

Although I have never had problems with acne, I did notice my forehead was getting quite oily from the use of the test. Someone who has problems with their skin might experience nasty outbreaks from this. I simply washed my face more often. But it was noticeable for sure. My forehead gleaned with oil at least a couple times a day. Not a sought-after look.

I also did begin to get gynecomastia around week three. It snuck up on me like gyno tends to do. One day I took my shirt off and noticed my right nipple looked puffy, like a little marshmallow. I've battled gyno before and hated it, like most people probably do. But the Nolvadex worked perfectly. I started using it the very first day I saw the puffiness, just one 10 mg tablet per day, and it stopped the gyno in it's tracks.

I waited to see if gyno would be an issue before starting the use of Nolvadex only because, for some reason, the Nolvadex was hugely expensive. The test cream cost about \$150 for a sixty day supply. But the Nolvadex ran me something like four dollars per pill! I'm not sure why it was so expensive, but if you can find a cheaper source for your estrogen blocker, then I would recommend doing so.

The whole process was fairly expensive, too. For the modest gains in muscularity that I enjoyed, \$600 was pricey, I thought. This did include my initial lab tests and blood work, however.

As anti-aging clinics grow more popular, the prices may become more competitive. However, with the government cracking down on steroid use, it will likely remain an expensive proposition to go through these legal channels to use hormones. This becomes even more relevant as we see professional athletes using the exact same clinics and products for their own performance enhancement.

Examples are not hard to find. From the doctor in Columbia, SC who was prescribing testosterone cream and HGH to members of the Carolina Panthers football team, to the recent "bust" of Signature Pharmacy in Orlando for compounding these drugs for other high-profile athletes as well as tens of thousands of "regular" people. It is obvious the public wants these products to be available to them. Also, it can give a professional athlete a sense of integrity to look in a camera and say, "I have never used an illegal performance enhancing drug", knowing that, technically they are not lying. It's not illegal if they have a prescription for it.

The wave of anti-aging clinics and doctors prescribing these drugs is powerful proof that the American people have shown they want these choices in their lives, and are willing to pay for them. Although we love to brag about our freedom in this country, the will of the public tends to only be done when big dollars are behind it. The money flowing into HRT over the last few years is huge, and subsequently these products will most likely continue to be available to us. So it really comes down to asking the question, "have you ever wanted to try a cycle of HRT?"