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## **Testosterone helps men have better BMR**

By Dr Niti Desai

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Wanting to lose weight is every second person's dilemma. And when they fail to achieve targets despite trying hard, they blame it on body metabolism being slow.

The body's metabolism is like an engine, it runs all the time — whether we are eating, moving, thinking or even sleeping. Metabolism is basically the performance of all bodily activities.

Everyone has a unique resting metabolic rate, called basal metabolic rate or BMR, which determines how quickly, or slowly, your body uses up energy when you are resting.

\* Lean Muscle Mass burns more calories than any other part of your body, and a higher percentage of lean body weight results in a higher metabolic rate. (That's why building muscle is a good idea if you wish to shed a few kilos.)

Also, as you age, your metabolism slows down because you lose lean body muscle. The decline usually starts from the age of 30 and drops by approximately 10 per cent every decade.

Men have higher levels of lean muscle mass (because of testosterone) which results in higher BMR than women.

Likewise, tall people have a more active metabolism and need more calories to stay energised.

\* Genetics: If your parents have sluggish metabolism, you too may have it.

\* Eating patterns: When you eat regularly, throughout the day, your metabolism is active. If you don't, (like have just lunch and a late dinner), your body goes into "starvation mode" causing your metabolism to slow down and your body to store excess energy as fat.

### Medical conditions that affect metabolism

\* Hypothyroidism: This condition is caused by an underactive thyroid gland. When too little thyroxine is released, the BMR is reduced. Signs of hypothyroidism include fatigue, weight gain and constipation.

\* Hyperthyroidism: This condition is caused by an overactive thyroid gland. When too much thyroxine is released, BMR is increased. Symptoms such as weight loss, increased heart rate and blood pressure, a swelling in the neck and protruding eyes may be an indication.

Boost your metabolism

\* Do not skip meals, especially breakfast which helps to kick-start your metabolism. Eat small and frequent meals throughout the day. No crash diets. When you lose weight too quickly, it interferes with the metabolic process. Weight loss should be slow and gradual. Drink enough water.

\* Increasing physical activity is a sure shot way of revving up the metabolism. Exercise regular for atleast 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Add weight training to your exercise routine to build lean muscle mass because more the muscle mass, the more calories are burned, even at rest. For every kilo of muscle that you gain, you burn 100 extra calories each day

\* Studies have shown that green tea increases your BMR. Even vinegar, grapefruit and our humble chilli is known to increase the metabolic rate. So spice up your metabolism.

### Body Types

There are three body types: endomorph, ectomorph and mesomorph. Your body type will affect your metabolism.

\* Endomorphs are naturally big. The body shape is wide, round and curvy with a large bone structure. Buttocks and thighs tend to be large. An endomorph will usually have a larger amount of fat stored as they have a higher number of fat cells. Endomorphs also have the slowest metabolism and therefore find it difficult to lose weight — but they gain weight easily.

\* Mesomorphs have a naturally athletic build. Female mesomorphs have an hourglass shape, while males are triangular/rectangular. Mesomorphs enjoy the advantage of being able to lose weight easily and can also develop lean muscle easily. But, though they enjoy a physical advantage, mesomorphs may become overweight through lack of exercise and poor nutrition. Mesomorphs have a moderate metabolism and will therefore put on weight if there is a calorie surplus.

\* Ectomorphs tend to be slim and petite. They have small bones and their musculature tends to be lean, with low body fat. Their metabolic rate is naturally very high, and therefore find it very difficult to gain weight either as fat or as lean muscle. However, a healthy diet and exercise program is just as important for the ectomorph.

Often, a person's body will be a combination of two of these body type — like “endo-mesomorph.” This person gains lots of weight unless he works out steadily and on the contrary, if they stop working out, weight lost will be easily gained.

One of the primary factors determining a person's body type is their metabolism. Some people find it easy to burn calories while other people find they have great difficulty burning calories, even if both people have the same diet and lifestyle.

(The writer is a nutritionist and consultant for Miss India contestants.)

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