

Irritable male syndrome



Swedish and American researchers have identified a “male depressive syndrome” that includes increased susceptibility to stress, sudden spells of anger, lower impulse control, anti-social behaviour, indecisiveness and feelings of being burnt out and empty.

The leading American researcher and most respected men’s health expert, Jed Diamond, first coined irritable male syndrome (IMS), and defines it as: “A state of hypersensitivity, anxiety, frustration, and anger that occurs in males and is associated with biochemical changes, hormonal fluctuations, stress and loss of male identity.”

Diamond describes IMS as a multidimensional problem “that affects, and is affected by, hormonal, physical, psychological, emotional, interpersonal, economic, social, sexual and spiritual changes.” Stress tends to be a common trigger, especially when combined with rapid hormone changes in mid-life.

A common symptom of this in men is anger and sometimes brooding withdrawal. Men with IMS can experience mood swings, stomach cramps and hot flushes, primarily caused by a drop in the male hormone, testosterone. IMS symptoms can occur at any time of the day as hormonal levels fluctuate. For example, levels of testosterone are highest after waking, and drop throughout the day.

A variety of symptoms are linked to IMS and may include the following:

- Anger
- Anxiety

- Hypersensitivity
- Irritability
- Feeling anti-social
- Feeling depressed

Changes in the male hormone cycle can also cause males to experience the following:

- A lack of arousal
- Backache
- Headache
- Hot flushes
- Sexual dysfunction
- Stomach cramps

If you think you might be experiencing IMS, schedule an appointment with your doctor. They will be able to determine if your symptoms are caused by a natural drop in testosterone or from a more serious medical condition. If your doctor determines that your symptoms are indeed caused by normal changes in testosterone, they will likely give you advice on how to cope with IMS symptoms.

There are some hormonal treatments available, while a well-balanced diet is useful. With moderate exercise of 30 minutes per day and six to eight hours sleep each night, most men can reduce the symptoms of IMS and stabilise their hormones.