

Understanding Your Body

Men Take Better Care Of Their Cars Than Themselves

(NAPSA)—Most men consider their car and its maintenance a priority and rarely fall short on the upkeep. Unfortunately, the same doesn't always apply to maintaining their health.

In fact, nearly 84 percent of men say they've had their car serviced in the past year, but only 66 percent have had an annual checkup with a doctor in the same period, according to a recent survey by the Men's Health Network (MHN), a Washington, DC-based nonprofit organization.

"Men hear an engine ping and they bring their car to a mechanic, but they don't listen when their body tells them it may be time to see a doctor," said Jean Bonhomme, MD, MPH of Emory University and a member of the MHN Board of Directors. "Regular checkups and age-appropriate screenings can help improve men's overall health and longevity."

To jumpstart men's health maintenance, MHN is launching the first annual National Testosterone Tune-Up in thousands of doctors' offices nationwide. As part of the Tune-Up, physicians will speak with men about low sex drive, erectile dysfunction, fatigue, depression, reduced muscle mass and strength, increased



body fat and decreased bone mineral density—all possible signs of low testosterone (low T). A simple blood test is needed to diagnose the condition.

"Low testosterone is an often overlooked medical condition with potential long-term health consequences if left untreated," said Dr. Bonhomme. "We recommend men have their testosterone levels screened after age 40, as this hormone tapers with age."

It is estimated low T affects up to five million American men. Problems in the testes, the pituitary gland or in a part of the brain called the hypothalamus may cause low T. As men get older, the ability to produce testos-

terone gradually declines. In fact, after age 30, testosterone levels drop by about 10 percent every decade. Treatment is for men of any age with below normal levels of testosterone accompanied by various symptoms, used under a doctor's care. There are several FDA-approved therapies available, including gels, patches and injections.

"As with all medications, it's important for doctors and patients to talk about the benefits and risks of treatment prior to initiating therapy," said Dr. Bonhomme. "Multiple studies have shown proper treatment can provide significant health benefits for men with testosterone deficiency."

The doctor-patient discussion about low T also may point to other illnesses or lifestyle issues. Men may even learn their low testosterone levels are related to other conditions, such as obesity or diabetes.

The National Testosterone Tune-Up kicks off June 14 during National Men's Health Week and runs through the end of July 2004. Visit www.tuneupyourT.com to locate a doctor participating in the program. Additional information about low T also is available on the site.