

Testosterone seems to help people with social anxiety

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A social network event may be nightmarish to those who suffer from SAD.

Testosterone makes people with social anxiety disorder less likely to avoid the gaze of other people. This is one of the conclusions of a study by behavioural scientists at Radboud University. The study is the first to demonstrate that testosterone can help people with social anxiety. The scientific journal *Psychoneuroendocrinology* published the results online on 16 September.

Previous studies on healthy people have indicated that [testosterone](#) facilitates contact with other people. It has also been shown that people with [social anxiety](#) have less testosterone than [healthy people](#) do, and that they are highly likely to suffer from social avoidance. "Testosterone has an anxiety-suppressing effect, and it facilitates contact in [social situations](#). We wanted to see what it would do in people with social anxiety," explains Dorien Enter, behavioural scientist at Radboud University and first author of the article.

Seeking eye contact

Enter conducted a placebo-controlled study involving 19 women with a [social anxiety disorder](#) (SAD) and a control group of equal size without SAD. On one day of the study, they received

testosterone, and on the other day, a placebo. Neither the researcher nor the test subject knew which condition applied. Enter examined whether the test subjects avoided eye contact – a typical behaviour for people with social anxiety – with angry, happy and neutral faces on a computer screen. Eye-tracking was used to follow their gaze. What did the research reveal? The test subjects with social anxiety who had received testosterone avoided [eye contact](#) less often than was the case for those in the placebo condition.

Medicine for anxiety?

Are testosterone supplements the future for people with social anxiety? "No. It is not healthy to take testosterone for extended periods. What we would now like to investigate is whether testosterone can be helpful as supplemental support for exposure-therapy sessions, in which people try to overcome their anxiety through exposure to social situations that they would normally avoid. We think that an extra dose of testosterone might help people cross this threshold."

Previous [studies](#) have indicated that testosterone facilitates social contact.

More information: "Single dose testosterone administration alleviates gaze avoidance in women with Social Anxiety Disorder." *Psychoneuroendocrinology* (2015), [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2015.09.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2015.09.008)

Provided by Radboud University

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