

Australia links low testosterone levels in women with double risk of cardiac events

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Findings suggest there might be some advantage to older women having high testosterone levels

Australia's Monash University study has challenged the view that testosterone is bad for women's hearts, showing that for women aged over 70, having low testosterone levels actually doubles the risk of a cardiac event.

Researchers say the findings warrant further research into the potential benefits of testosterone therapies for older women.

Before menopause, women's ovaries are the primary source of testosterone circulating in the blood. After menopause, because the ovaries stop functioning, blood testosterone is made from the hormone DHEA which comes from adrenal glands.

Using data captured in the longitudinal ASPREE (ASpirin in Reducing Events in the Elderly) randomised trial, this study, led by Susan Davis, Professor of women's health in the Monash School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, measured blood testosterone, DHEA and oestrogen concentrations in women over 70 with no prior CVD events. Women who had low blood testosterone and DHEA concentrations but not low estrogen, had twice the risk of a cardiovascular event than women with higher testosterone blood levels.

"Further research is needed to better understand testosterone action in blood vessels and the heart, including whether treating postmenopausal women with low testosterone protects against cardiovascular disease", said the researchers.