

## Men at Forty: Beating “Male Menopause” by Being Active

**Dr. Karthikesu Karthijekan,**  
Senior Lecturer  
Department of Supplementary Health Sciences,  
Faculty of Health-Care Sciences,  
Eastern University, Sri Lanka.



Are you aware of the following changes in your body and mind when you reach your 40s? Abdominal obesity (man boobs), reduced ability to exercise, mood swings, anxiety, depression, poor sleep quality, weakened muscle strength, poor concentration...

**These insidious changes in men’s physical and mental health are associated with low levels of the male hormone called “testosterone”.** After the age of 40, testosterone levels decline gradually averaging 1% to 2% per year, called “**male menopause**”, a condition that should be considered to improve overall men’s health. Testosterone is a steroid hormone that helps to regulate fat distribution, increase bone mass and density, increase muscle mass and strength, regulate sex drive (libido) and increase red blood cell production in men. **Depression, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic syndrome are linked to low levels of testosterone in men.**

Numerous research evidence shows that low levels of testosterone in men predispose to the accumulation of visceral fat, leading to the development of abdominal or central obesity-larger belly (waist circumference greater than 90 cm in men), metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance, and diabetes.

In menopause, psychological problems such as anxiety and depression are common and can also damage heart health. depression and heart health are interrelated.

### **How can you overcome it? Weight management is the key .....**

Overweight (body mass index (BMI) between 23–27.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) and Obesity (BMI >27.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) have become an emerging public health problem in Sri Lanka. Around one-fifth of Sri Lankan men are centrally obsessed (waist circumference greater than 90 cm).

According to the data published in the Global Obesity Observatory in 2022, the proportion of overweight and obese Sri Lankan men aged 41 to 50 was 42.12%, and 14.23%, and the proportion of overweight and obese men aged 51to 72 was over

40%. Overweight and obese lead to many physical, psychological, and economic consequences.

The level of testosterone is low in obese men compared to normal-weight men of the same age. Considering the physical and psychological consequences of menopause, weight management is the key to maintaining the physical and mental health of men. **“Being active”** is the best-proven way to tackle this issue in men. Many international health guidelines recommended engaging in **at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week** can help to control weight, improve insulin resistance, reduce anxiety and depression, improve sleeping quality and immune function, and reduce cardiovascular disease.

***How do you know you are performing moderate-intensity exercise?***

Moderate-intensity exercise refers to exercising with a heart rate of 50 to 70 percent of your maximum heart rate, with an estimated maximum heart rate per minute of "220 minus your age." For example, at the age of 60, the maximum heart rate is  $(220 - 60) = 160$  beats per minute, and the heart rate during moderate-intensity exercise is 80 to 112 beats per minute.

In addition to this, the **“talk test”** is the simplest way to assess your exercise intensity. *If you can talk and communicate while exercising, but not sing, that's moderate-intensity exercise.*

***Add exercise to your routine list***

The exercise should be incorporated into your daily life. For example, you can go for a brisk walk in the park or beach with your friends or families or you can exercise by listening to music.

***Oh, don't you have time to exercise? then how do deal with time shortages?***

Don't worry. If you can't exercise for 30 minutes at a time, you can separate it into 3 sessions of 10 minutes each.

***Taken home messages***

- Men in their 40 should pay attention. Don't ignore physical and mental health issues in your 40s.
- Obesity and depression damage health, exercise 30 minutes per day with moderate intensity can help to beat “male menopause”.
- Enjoy while exercising to make it a daily routine.