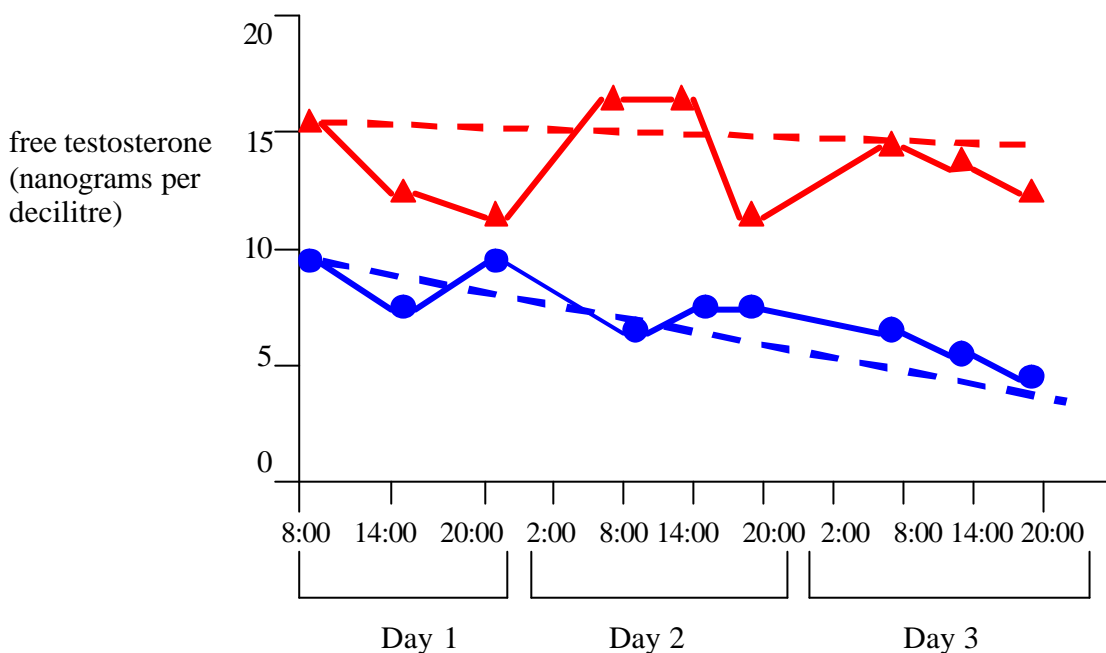


BEDROOM SCIENCE: TEST YOUR FRISKY FACTOR

Testosterone is the main sex hormone in men. Women have testosterone too, but, in women, other hormones play a more important role in sexual behaviour. Your level of testosterone governs several body functions: weight gain, muscle mass and beard growth, as well as libido – your sex drive. Hormone levels, including that of testosterone, vary naturally throughout the day, in a circadian rhythm, and also vary over longer time scales, such as months and years. In the Lab Rats series the presenters Mike and Zeron had blood tests to measure their testosterone levels, and their results are shown below. Mike's values are shown as blue circles; Zeron's as red triangles. The dotted lines show the trends: Zeron's levels remain pretty stable over the three days, but Mike's shows a downward decline.



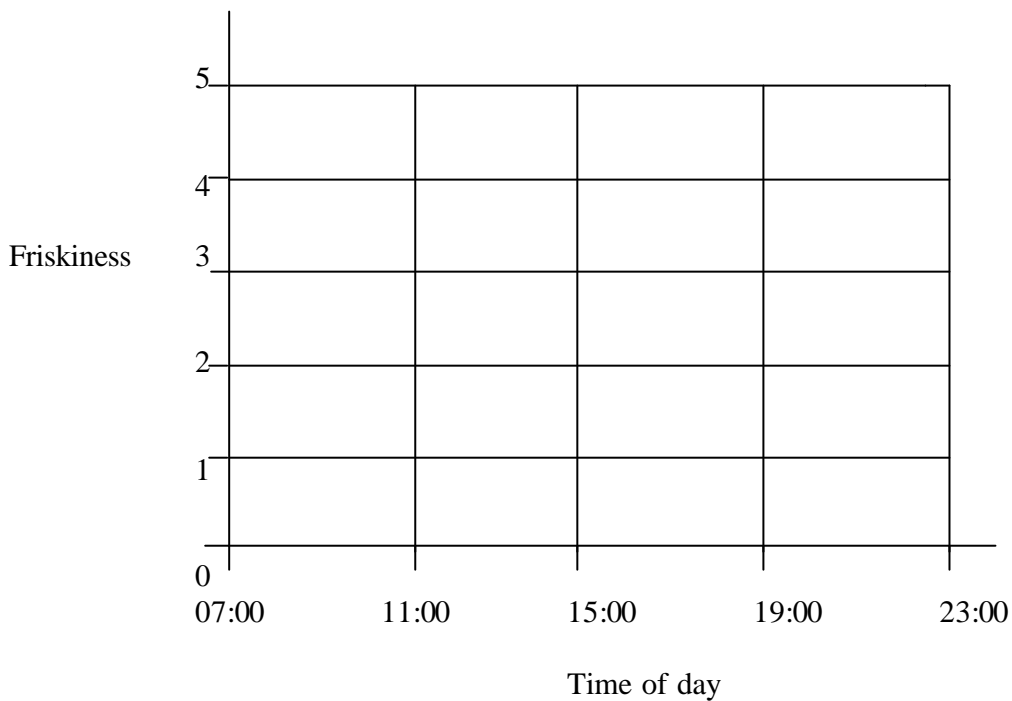
You can see that overall, Zeron's testosterone levels are higher than Mike's, and peak during the early part of the day, dropping in the evening. Mike's levels drop progressively over the three days as he gets more and more tired due to the sleep deprivation, and he doesn't have any marked peaks, although on days 1 and 2 he does seem to perk up a bit in the afternoon and evening. Both lads are well within the average healthy range of between 5 and 20 nanograms per decilitre (a nanogram is a thousand millionth of a gram, and a decilitre is a tenth of a litre, or to put it another way 100 ml).

All things being equal, many people find their desire for sex also varies during the day, week or month. This is not just because of hormones – other factors like how tired you are, or the availability of a suitable partner, also play a part. But each of us has our own natural rhythms, and in this activity, you can investigate yours.

How Frisky Do You Feel?

Start by getting in tune with your body. Think about how you feel. Without any particular stimuli, do you feel like having sex? Try rating yourself on a scale of one to five.

When you think you can assess how frisky you're feeling, you can start a 'diary'. Monitor your feelings at intervals during the day. To be completely scientific, you should do this every hour, but in the real world this may not be practical. Try testing yourself say, when you wake up, mid-morning, lunchtime, tea time, during the early evening and at bedtime (assuming you work a 'normal' day). Put your results on the graph below. It's often interesting to compare results, so why not get a friend or a partner to try this as well.



How Did You Do?

If you're a man, you probably found that you felt more like sex at certain times of day than at others. This is partly to do with how your hormones are cycling: if your testosterone peaks in the morning, chances are that's when you feel friskiest. Many men like sex best first thing in the morning. But if your testosterone peaks in the evening then you'll probably more into nights of passion.

If you're a woman, you may have found there was less of a marked change throughout the day. Women's sex drive, although affected by the level of testosterone, is not driven by it to the same extent as men's sex drive is. Several other hormones, including oestrogen and progesterone, affect women's libido, and there is evidence suggesting that women are more affected by subtle environmental factors than men are.

The bottom line is that we are all complex individuals, and although hormone levels influence our behaviour, they are certainly not the only important factors affecting the way we live and love.

How Well Matched Are You And Your Partner?

If you and your partner have both measured your friskiness levels throughout the day, you can easily see if there are any 'prime times', when you're both feeling pretty frisky. Or maybe there are times when one of you is ready for sex and the other definitely isn't? Can you put this information to good use?

Curiosity Zone – Time To Experiment

Now that you can assess your sex drive, try some comparisons. There's some suggestions below, but feel free to add your own tests. You might be able to identify factors that you should definitely avoid when you're planning a night in. This could change your life!

- Are your readings the same on work days and days off?
- What about when you're on holiday?
- How about after you've been exercising?
- What happens when you get very drunk?
- Does eating spicy food make a difference?
- How about after a cold shower?

If you're keen, then how about some long term tests?

- Do you feel sexier in the spring, summer, autumn or in the winter?
- Does age make a difference – try this again in 10 years!