

# MASCULINIZING HORMONES

An illustration on a light purple background featuring a central blue syringe with a needle pointing upwards. Surrounding the syringe are several pills and capsules in various colors including purple, blue, white, and teal. The word "HORMONES" is written in a large, bold, dark purple, stylized font at the bottom of the illustration area.

# HORMONES



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# Masculinizing FAQ

Hormone therapy (HT) can help transgender and gender non-conforming people feel more comfortable in their bodies. This guide will help you understand the basics about masculinizing hormone therapy and the possible risks and benefits.

## 1 What are hormones? What are sex hormones?

Hormones are chemicals which regulate the body's functions. Sex hormones control the development of sex characteristics.

## 2 What is masculinizing hormone therapy (HT)?

Masculinizing HT is taking medications to adjust the levels of sex hormones in your body and is used to reduce feminine features and increase masculine features.

## 3 What masculinizing medications will I take?

There is one main masculinizing medication - testosterone. Testosterone is available in several forms and your provider will talk with you about which form is best for you. The doctor may also prescribe additional medications.

## 4 How can I decrease the risks of masculinizing HT?

Healthy lifestyle habits can reduce HT risks and can include regular physical activity, reducing or removing tobacco use, eating a healthy diet, limiting alcohol use, and getting emotional and social support when you need it. Attending your monitoring visits during HT help our team stay up-to-date on your health and address any concerns you may have.

## 5 What about sex and pregnancy?

Testosterone generally increases libido, especially when you first start taking it. Some people experience vaginal dryness, which can impact sexual pleasure and functioning. Taking testosterone decreases your fertility, which can be permanent even if you discontinue testosterone. However, testosterone is not a reliable method of birth control. Speak with your doctor about effective birth control methods and about your future fertility plans before beginning HT.

# What changes can I expect to see?

Everyone's body is different, so the changes seen from HT vary. Factors which can affect HT include your genetics, the age at which you begin taking hormones and your overall health. Many people notice changes within a few months of starting HT, and can expect to see the maximum effect within 2-3 years. Some changes are permanent and some may be reversible if HT is stopped.

Higher doses of HT will not necessarily make things move more quickly. Sometimes, this may actually make your body convert the excess hormones into hormones we are trying to lower, slowing or reversing the masculinizing effects.

## **Hair Growth**

This is a permanent change and usually begins within a few months of starting HT. Hair growth often begins on your legs and back, then chest and stomach, followed by hair on your face. Facial hair can take up to 4 years or more to grow in fully. Some people may also experience "male pattern balding".

## **Body Shape, Fat & Muscle Changes**

You may notice muscles increase, and fat collecting more around the belly and less on the hips and thighs. Many also experience an increase in appetite and metabolism.

## **Emotional Fluctuations**

Your overall emotional state may change. Transitioning can almost feel like a second puberty. Talking with a counselor, therapist, and your doctor can help you explore new thoughts and feelings as you transition

## **Voice Changes**

This is a permanent change and you will notice your voice begin to deepen within 3-6 months of beginning HT. Many people's voices change fully within one year.

## **Skin Changes**

Some people become more prone to acne while on HT, but it often improves after one year. Your skin may also become coarser and oilier than before HT.

## **Menstruation, Ovulation and Clitoral Changes**

Periods often stop within 6 months of being on HT, though you may have some irregular bleeding. Most people also stop ovulating, though HT is not an effective method of birth control! Clitoral enlargement can be a permanent change which begins within 3-6 months of beginning HT, some people have soreness or discomfort as the clitoris enlarges.

# Forms of Testosterone

1

## INJECTABLE

Injectable testosterone is the least expensive and provides quicker effects. You can give yourself the injections or have someone else give them to you.

2

## TRANSDERMAL

Transdermal (through the skin) forms of testosterone, like skin patches or gels, are more expensive but provide a steady daily amount of medication. They can also cause skin irritations on the part of your skin where you use them. If you are using transdermal testosterone, keep in mind that it can rub off on clothes and bedding and be transferred to other people.

## Risks and Side Effects of Testosterone:

Changes in cholesterol, high blood pressure, weight gain, infertility, "male pattern" hair loss, acne, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, liver disease and polycythemia (increase in red blood cells).

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## Questions or Concerns?

Call WE Health Clinic with any questions or concerns, our staff is happy to help!

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