

Monitoring HRT for Transgender Men

Once you start the HRT, regular monitoring is mandatory to check your health condition.

1) Measure serum testosterone every 2–3 months until levels are in the normal physiologic male range:

a) For testosterone enanthate/cypionate injections, the testosterone level should be measured mid-way between injections. If the level is >700 ng/dl or <350 ng/dl, adjust dose accordingly.

b) For transdermal testosterone, the testosterone level can be measured at any time after 1 week.

c) For oral testosterone undecanoate, the testosterone level should be measured 3–5 h after ingestion.

2) Measure estradiol levels during the first 6 months of testosterone treatment or until there has been no uterine bleeding for 6 months. Estradiol levels should be <50 pg/ml.

3) Measure complete blood count and liver function tests at baseline, then every 3 months for the first year and 1–2 times a year. Monitor weight, blood pressure, lipids, fasting plasma glucose (if family history of diabetes) and hemoglobin (if diabetic) at regular visits.

4) Consider BMD testing at baseline if risk factors for osteoporotic fracture are present (e.g., previous fracture, family history, glucocorticoid use, prolonged hypogonadism).



5) If cervical tissue is present, an annual pap smear examination.

6) If mastectomy is not performed, then consider mammograms as recommended.

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Hormone Replacement Therapy for Transgender Men

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What is Hormone Replacement Therapy?

It is a form of hormone therapy administered to the persons with Gender Dysphoria who wish to develop the physical characteristics of their self-affirmed gender.

A safe and effective hormone regimen will:-

- Suppress endogenous hormone secretion (hormones that your body already secretes) & maintain hormone levels within the normal range for your self-affirmed gender.

It is of two main types:

- Masculinizing Hormone therapy is for Transgender Men to develop masculine physical characteristics.

- Feminizing Hormone therapy is for Transgender Women to develop feminine physical characteristics.

(We noticed a typo in the above paragraph of the previous version. This is the corrected copy as on 17/03/2023.)

What is Gender Dysphoria?

Gender Dysphoria is a condition where a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their biological sex and their gender identity.

The Criteria for Hormone Therapy:

- 1- Gender Dysphoria certificate from a qualified mental health professional.
- 2- Capacity to make a fully informed decision and to consent for treatment; since the effects of hormone therapy are not always reversible and feminizing/masculinizing hormone therapy may lead to irreversible physical changes, informed consent is mandatory.
- 3- The person must be an adult (18 years). In the case of a minor, parents' consent is mandatory.
- 4- If there are any medical or mental health issues present (Blood sugar, Blood pressure, Cholesterol, thyroid etc) they must be well controlled before starting the HRT.

'Hormone Replacement Therapy should be only taken with the guidance of a qualified and community-sensitive Endocrinologist. The procedure and treatment differs for each person depending on their physical health.'

Physical Effects of Hormone Therapy for Transgender Men

How soon effects of HRT are felt depends on each individual's body and health. Different physical changes will be seen at different points of time for up to 2 years. This is only a general list. Please consult with your doctor for clarifications on your individual experience.

- Skin oiliness/acne (starting from 1-6 months, with expected maximum effect in 1-2 years)
- Facial/body hair growth (starting from 3-6 months, with expected maximum effect in 3-5 years)
- Scalp hair loss (starting after 12 months)
- Increased muscle mass & strength (starting from 6-12 months, with expected maximum effect in 2-5 years)
- Body fat redistribution with atrophy of breast tissue (starting from 3-6 months, with expected maximum effect in 2-5 years)
- Cessation of menstruation (takes effect in 2-6 months)
- Clitoral enlargement (starting from 3-6 months, with expected maximum effect in 1-2 years)
- Vaginal atrophy (starting from 3-6 months, with expected maximum effect in 1-2 years)
- Deepened voice (starting from 3-12 months)

Risks/Side-effects of Hormone Therapy

All medical interventions carry risks, and can be managed with a healthy lifestyle and regular monitoring by a qualified endocrinologist. Risks are categorized as follows:

(i) Likely increased risk with hormone therapy

Polycythemia
Weight Gain
Acne
Androgenic Alopecia
Sleep apnea

(ii) Possibly increased risk with hormone therapy

Elevated liver enzymes
Hyperlipidemia
Destabilization of certain psychiatric disorders
Cardiovascular diseases
Hypertension
Type 2 diabetes

(iii) Inconclusive or no increased risk

Loss of bone density
Breast cancer
Cervical cancer
Ovarian cancer
Uterine cancer