

BRIEFINGS ON TRANS HEALTHCARE

FACTSHEET: GENDER-AFFIRMING HORMONE THERAPY

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What is gender-affirming hormone therapy?

Gender-affirming hormones are medications (oestrogen or testosterone) that help change a person's body to be more in line with their gender. For example, oestrogen helps make a person's body more feminine through features such as softer skin, reduced body hair and breast development. Testosterone helps to make a person's body more masculine through features such as a deeper voice and facial hair growth.

Is gender-affirming hormone therapy safe?

Gender-affirming hormone therapy is acceptably safe and effective. It is effective in producing masculinising or feminising effects, over several years of treatment. For many young people it reduces symptoms of poor mental wellbeing, such as depression, anxiety, and suicidality, especially if these are related to gender dysphoria. Research also shows that it increases young people's happiness with their bodies and improves their general wellbeing and life satisfaction, on average. It is not expected to help with mental health problems that are unrelated to gender dysphoria.

Gender-affirming hormones can impact on a person's fertility, but depending on individual circumstances, there are options available to preserve their fertility for the future, and for some people fertility may return if gender-affirming hormones are paused. It is important to have expert fertility counselling to understand its effects.

What is the process for accessing gender-affirming hormone therapy in Australia?

To access gender-affirming hormone therapy in Australia, young people generally have to be referred by a doctor to a specialist clinic. There is often a long waitlist for these clinics; a young person can wait up to 12 months for a first appointment.

This clinic will ask about the young person and family's thoughts, concerns, and wishes, and consider any other factors that are necessary to ensure the young person is fully supported (e.g., other relevant physical, developmental or mental health concerns, as

well as family and peer supports). This includes fertility counselling. The young person should have a mature understanding of exactly what the treatment will do, its effects, risks, and unknowns. The young person is supported to think carefully about their possible future feelings and wishes, as gender-affirming hormones have some permanent effects.

Treatment decisions are made collaboratively with the young person, their family, and the healthcare team; gender-affirming hormones are only administered if they are wished for by the young person and deemed appropriate by the family and clinicians. While on this medication, the young person will continue to have regular appointments with medical and mental health clinicians to monitor the effects of this medication.

There is no set age for beginning gender-affirming hormone therapy in Australia; it depends on each young person's specific circumstances. They may be started for a mature young person in mid- to late-adolescence. The legal requirements for parent/guardian consent vary between States and may change with new legal developments over time.

Where can I learn more?

You can read our scientific evidence brief on gender-affirming hormone therapy [here](#).

Intended use of information

While we make every effort to make sure the information in this resource is accurate and informative, the information does not take the place of professional medical advice.

Do not use our information as a substitute for the advice of a health professional.

If you are an individual seeking medical or health information for yourself or for someone else, you should obtain advice relevant to your particular circumstances from a health professional.

More information and support

For clinicians, please contact AusPATH for resources and support. www.auspath.org.au

For families and young people, please contact Transcend Australia for resources and support. www.transcend.org.au

This resource and associated evidence briefs and fact sheets can be downloaded from www.transcend.org.au/resources/evidence