

Name: _____

Medical Record # _____

Date of Birth: _____

Testosterone Hormone Consent

Kaiser Permanente – Gender Pathways Clinic



Overview

Some transgender and gender nonconforming people choose to take testosterone to affirm their gender. Testosterone can make your body appear more masculine and less feminine.

Some people find that testosterone helps them feel more comfortable with their body and expressing their gender identity, but other people don't. Medical interventions are not required to change your name or gender marker legally in Oregon. And, testosterone is not required to access chest contouring surgery or a hysterectomy.

Testosterone therapy:

- Is available to you as needed to affirm gender.
- Is often taken continually, and possibly lifelong.
- Can be used for brief periods of time under the care of your doctor.

Being well-informed will help you have realistic expectations about the effects of testosterone.

Most hormone changes:

- Occur over 2 to 3 years.
- Can take several months to have a noticeable effect on your appearance.

No one can predict how fast, or how much, change will happen.

Testosterone

Testosterone is the sex hormone that causes characteristics that are typically male. For example, it:

- Builds muscle.
- Causes facial hair growth.
- May deepen the voice.

We may prescribe testosterone as:

- An injection. Testosterone can be injected into a muscle (intermuscular) or into the fat under the skin (subcutaneous). It is usually injected every 1 to 2 weeks.
- A skin gel. This is testosterone that is applied to and absorbs through the skin. These forms work more slowly than the injections.

We currently don't prescribe testosterone in pill form. The body may not absorb it properly and it can cause liver problems.

We will order regular blood tests to check how your body is responding to the hormones.

Testosterone Dosage

Hormone doses (amounts) vary from person to person. How much you take will depend on:

- How your body reacts to the medications.
- The type of injections and how often you get them.
- Your treatment goals. People have a wide range of goals related to how they want to look and feel.

Talk with your physician about your desired outcomes. Together we will develop a hormone treatment plan to help you achieve your goals safely. Working closely with your physician will ensure that your hormones are in a healthy range for you.

Taking more testosterone than prescribed:

- Won't make changes happen more quickly. Your body can also convert excess testosterone into estrogen.
- Can be unsafe.

Changes in your hormone levels may cause ups and downs in your mood and energy level.

If this happens, we may recommend you:

- Change how often you get your injections.
- Change the dose.
- Switch to a gel instead of injection.

Physical Changes

The amount of change and how long it takes is different for each person. It may take a few months or longer before you notice changes

Effect	Expected Onset	Expected Maximum Effect
Skin oiliness / acne	1-6 months	1-2 years
Facial / body hair growth	3-6 months	3-5 years
Scalp hair loss	>12 months	Variable
Increased muscle mass / strength	6-12 months	2-5 years
Body fat redistribution	3-6 months	2-5 years
Cessation of menses	2-6 months	n/a
Clitoral enlargement	3-6 months	1-2 years
Vaginal atrophy	3-6 months	1-2 years
Deepened voice (does not happen in all patients)	3-12 months	1-2 years
Increased libido	1-3 months	variable

Some of the physical changes will be permanent, even if you stop taking testosterone.

These changes include:

- Bigger clitoris. The clitoris may increase in size to half an inch or an inch.
- Deeper voice.
- Facial hair.
- Hair loss at the temple and crown. It is possible to become completely bald.
- More, thicker, and coarser hair on the arms, hands, back, chest, legs, and feet.

Other Effects

Testosterone causes some physical changes that will go away if you stop taking it. These include:

- Acne.
- End of menstruation. Periods usually stop 1 to 6 months after starting testosterone.

- Change in body fat distribution. You may notice that you lose fat on the buttocks, hips, and thighs. You may gain abdominal fat instead.
- Increase in muscle mass and strength.
- Increased sex drive.
- Vaginal dryness.

Testosterone can also cause emotional changes. For example, you could become more irritable, frustrated, or angry. Your care team can help you find advocacy and support resources.

What Doesn't Change

Chest size and shape

The appearance of your chest typically does not change. Some people consider surgery to create a chest appearance that is more consistent with their gender identity. This is called masculinizing chest surgery or top surgery

Voice

Testosterone may deepen your voice. However, your speech sounds and style will remain the same. We can talk to you about speech therapy to help you develop a way of speaking that reflects your gender identity and expression.

Preventive screenings

Age-appropriate routine cancer screenings are still recommended.

For example, if you **have not had**:

- A hysterectomy, we recommend performing cervical cancer screening.

- Top surgery, we recommend mammograms for breast cancer screening. Some patients may be advised to get mammograms even after top surgery, particularly if they are at an increased risk for breast cancer.

Talk to your clinician to see if these tests are recommended for you and when.

Fertility

The full effects of testosterone on fertility are not yet known.

- You may or may not be able to get pregnant even if you stop taking testosterone.
- Some people who have temporarily stopped testosterone have gone on to have normal pregnancies.

Talk to us about any plans or hopes about starting a family so we can discuss your options. You may wish to consider collecting and freezing eggs to be used in the future by you or someone else. The best time to do this is before you begin taking testosterone.

It is possible you could get pregnant even after testosterone stops your menstrual periods depending on the type of sex you have and whether your partner makes sperm or not.

- You should not take testosterone if you are pregnant as it may cause birth defects.
- Testosterone can cause serious birth defects if you do get pregnant.

If you are having sex that could result in a pregnancy, please talk with us about effective birth control options while you are taking testosterone.

Risks and Side Effects of Masculinizing Hormone Therapy

Overview

Each person responds differently to testosterone therapy. Like all medications it can cause side effects.

Most side effects are mild. Others are more serious. We don't yet know all the side effects of taking testosterone for a long time. In rare cases it can cause severe complications.

Using testosterone for the purpose of gender affirmation is an off-label use. This means that:

- It has not been approved by the government (FDA).
- The medicine and dose (amount) recommended for you is based on your clinician's judgment and experience.

Before we prescribe testosterone, we will talk to you about:

- The risks and side effects.
- How to lower your risk of serious side effects.
- Identifying early signs of serious side effects so we can address them.

Testosterone can interact with other drugs and substances and cause medical problems.

We need to know everything you take or use, including:

- Prescription medications
- Alcohol

- Dietary supplements (example: biotin)
- Herbs
- Other hormones
- Non-prescribed legal or illegal drugs
- Nicotine products

We need to know this information for your safety. This will not affect your ability to receive medical care.

When Testosterone is Not the Best Choice

Testosterone is not an appropriate treatment for everyone. It should not be used by anyone who:

- Is pregnant.
- Has uncontrolled coronary artery (heart) disease.

Some people should be very careful about taking testosterone. We will ask you to seriously consider the risks if you are obese, currently smoke cigarettes or use other nicotine products, or if you have:

- Severe acne
- A family history of heart disease or breast cancer
- Had a blood clot in a leg, arm, or lungs
- High levels of cholesterol
- Active liver disease
- A high red blood cell count (hematocrit)

Heart-Related Risks

Testosterone may increase your risk of developing numerous conditions that can affect your heart health.

These include:

- Unhealthy cholesterol levels. Your HDL or “good” cholesterol may decrease, and your LDL or “bad” cholesterol may increase.
- High blood pressure.
- Increased fat around the heart and other organs.
- Excess red blood cells. Testosterone will increase your red blood cells and hemoglobin to normal levels for someone assigned male at birth. If it goes higher than this, it can increase your risk for stroke and heart attack. This is uncommon but could be life-threatening. We will order blood tests to monitor red blood cell counts for as long as you take testosterone.
- Heart disease. Your risk will be higher if you have a family history, are overweight, or smoke.

There are many things you can do to protect your heart. They include:

- Maintaining a healthy weight. This can reduce your risk of developing heart disease.
- Being active. Regular exercise is good for your heart health and can increase your good HDL cholesterol.
- Attending all medical checkups. We will schedule periodic heart-health checkups and cholesterol tests.
- Quitting smoking. If you smoke or use other forms of nicotine, quitting is the best thing you can do for your heart and your overall health.

Your care team can help you find resources to help you get more active, lose weight, or quit smoking.

Other Risks

Other risks when taking testosterone include:

- Liver damage. Testosterone can damage the liver and possibly lead to liver disease. We will order regular blood tests to monitor your liver function.
- Cancer. Your body can turn testosterone into estrogen. It’s not known if this increases your risk of developing cancers of the breast, the ovaries, or the uterus.

- Diabetes. Taking testosterone can decrease your body's response to insulin and cause weight gain. We will order periodic blood glucose tests for as long as you take testosterone.
- Headaches. Talk to your doctor if you develop frequent or severe headaches or migraines.
- Emotional changes. You may feel irritable or angry, especially during the first 6 months of treatment. We can refer you to resources to help you manage your emotions.

Sexual Health

The effects of testosterone on sexual health include:

- Increased sex drive for most people. Some people also notice changes in their sexual attraction after starting testosterone.
- Thinning of the tissues that line the vagina and cervix. This can lead to discomfort and tears or abrasions during vaginal sex, which increases the risk of sexually transmitted infection, including HIV. Using lubricants can help.

It is important to speak openly with your clinician about your sex life. This will help you learn the best ways to prevent and check for infections.

Risks to Others

Testosterone is a controlled substance. You should not share it with anyone. Follow these safety measures:

- Keep the medication in a safe location.
- Do not expose family members and children to testosterone gel. This could cause unwanted development of masculine characteristics in female partners or children. Follow the instructions on the patch or gel to prevent this.
- Don't share needles.
- Use needles once only and dispose of them properly in a sharps container.

Preventing Medical Complications

In order to get the best and safest results from testosterone, it is important for you to:

- Take testosterone as prescribed. Taking higher doses than prescribed won't make changes happen faster and can increase your risk for serious health problems and other undesired effects. Your body can convert extra testosterone into estrogen, which can slow down or stop desired characteristics from developing. Your clinician will prescribe testosterone based on your goals and what is safest for you. Everyone's body responds differently to testosterone. If you feel your dose is too low, talk to your clinician.
- Tell your clinician if you have any problems or are unhappy with the treatment.
- Follow through with all scheduled physical exams and blood tests to check for any side effects. Your clinician may request appointments every few months in the beginning, until your hormone levels are at goal and you are getting the desired effects. After this, your clinician will request yearly labs (blood work) and a visit while taking hormones.
- Talk with your clinician if you have or develop any of the conditions that make it risky to take testosterone. Your physician can evaluate whether it is safe to start or continue testosterone. They may suggest you cut the dose or stop taking it. This may happen if the side effects are severe or there are health risks that cannot be controlled.
- If you decide to stop taking testosterone, discuss it with your clinician.

Based on all this information (check one)

I want to begin taking testosterone

I do not want to begin taking testosterone

Patient signature **Date**

Clinician signature **Date**

