**Forms of Testosterone**

**INJECTABLE (injections or shots)**
- Usually given as a weekly or every other week shot.
- In the beginning, injections may provide quicker effects compared to patches, gels, or creams.
- You can give yourself the injections or have someone else give them to you or come to the clinic for shots.
- Some people can have muscle soreness or pain and/or skin irritation where the injection is given. The shot can go in the muscle (called intramuscular or IM) or under the skin (called subcutaneous or SQ).
- Some people are uncomfortable with needles and prefer other options.

**TRANSDERMAL (medicine on the skin)**
- Medicine that you put on the skin and it is absorbed through the skin, like patches, creams or gels.
- Sometimes, these medicines may be more expensive than injections.
- You do not have to give yourself a shot.
- These forms of testosterone give a steady, daily amount of medication and some people feel better with a daily medicine.
- In the beginning, transdermal medications may give slower and more gradual changes than injections.
- May cause skin irritations on the part of your skin where you use them.
- Cream or gel can rub off on clothes and bedding and may be transferred to other people with skin to skin contact.

**Risks and Side Effects of Testosterone**
Overall, testosterone is a low risk and safe medicine. The main risk of using testosterone is polycythemia (increase in red blood cells). If red blood cells are too high this can increase the risk for blood clots. Other risks are not well established but testosterone use may increase the risk for heart disease, increase cholesterol, increase blood pressure, decrease bone density and in rare situations may worsen mood. Testosterone may cause reduced fertility or infertility and can harm a fetus if used during pregnancy.

Your care team will work with you to check blood tests and schedule regular visits to keep the risks of testosterone as low and safe as possible.
Frequently Asked Questions

What are hormones and how do they work?

What are chemicals in the body that affect many of the body's functions and systems. Some hormones, like estrogen and testosterone, for example, can influence what are called secondary sex characteristics, like body hair, muscle mass, menstrual cycle, voice quality, etc.

What are the benefits of taking testosterone?

Using hormones may or may not be important for people to affirm their gender. Everyone has unique goals and some people use testosterone for a lifetime and some people may choose to start and stop testosterone. What matters most is safely providing options for you to affirm your gender identity in the ways that matter most to you. Using testosterone to affirm gender identity can have many benefits like improved quality of life, improved mental health, and improved physical health.

How can I best take care of myself while using testosterone?

Doing the best you can to take care of your body can help reduce some of the risks that can come along with taking testosterone. Staying healthy may include a variety of things like regular physical movement and exercise, cutting down or removing smoking or tobacco, eating nutritious foods, limiting alcohol use to one drink or less per day, and getting emotional and social support when you need it.

What about fertility and future pregnancy or parenting?

Taking testosterone may decrease your fertility, and this can be permanent even if you stop taking testosterone. But, testosterone is not birth control. If you have sex with a person who makes sperm you can become pregnant. Your provider can help you think about preserving fertility and family building, parenting and/or birth control if needed.

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