

Forms of Testosterone

1

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.

2

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.

Testosterone

Hormones



Frequently Asked Questions

Every body is different, and the effects of hormones can vary from person to person. This guide will give you the basics about how testosterone hormone therapy works, what the potential benefits and risks are, how to safely and effectively use hormone medications, and some ideas about what to expect.

1

What are hormones and how do they work?

Hormones 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.

2

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 will 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.

3

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.

4

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.



What changes can I expect to see?

Everyone is different, changes you see on testosterone may vary. This depends on many factors including your genes, the age at which you start taking hormones, as well as your overall health. Many people begin noticing changes within a few months of beginning hormones, but the maximum changes can take up to 5 or more years. Some of the changes are permanent and some may not be permanent. Taking higher doses of hormones often will not make changes happen more quickly and may increase risk. It is important to work with your provider to find the right dose for you. The best dose will be different from person to person.

SOME CHANGES THAT CAN HAPPEN ARE:

Hair growth

This is usually a permanent change and often begins within a few months of starting testosterone. Body hair may grow on the legs, arms, back, chest, butt, and/or stomach. Facial hair can take up to 5 years or more to grow in fully and beards vary from person to person. Some people also experience a loss of hair on the temples and crown of the head. There are medicines that may help slow or prevent balding but balding is often a permanent change

Mood & emotions

People often have changes to mood and emotions on testosterone. Many of these changes can be positive like improved self esteem and improved mood and relief of gender dysphoria. Sometimes mood and emotions may be like a "roller coaster." Rarely, depression and/or anxiety may worsen. Many people find that talking to a counselor, therapist, or mental health provider can help in exploring new thoughts and feelings.

Increase in muscle size & changes in body shape

You may notice that your muscles increase and that fat may collect more around the belly and less on the hips and thighs. Many people experience an increase in appetite and may feel more hungry when taking testosterone

Skin changes

Some people get more acne while they are on testosterone, but it often improves after a year. You may also notice that your skin is coarser and more oily than it was before. Many people often also notice changes to body odor.

Genital changes

Growth of the clitoris can begin within a few months of starting testosterone and is often one of the first changes and is usually a permanent change. Soreness and discomfort may occur with this change. Sex drive may also increase on testosterone. Some people may have vaginal dryness or pain. Talk with your provider if you have discomfort or pain or any questions about sex or sexuality on testosterone.

Voice changes

This is usually a permanent change and may start as early as 6 months on testosterone and change fully within 1-2 years.

Ovulation & periods stop

Periods often stop within 6 months of being on testosterone, although there may be some irregular bleeding from time to time. Ovulation (releasing an egg from the ovary) usually stops when using testosterone but it is not birth control. There are medications (such as Depo Provera, which is also a birth control method) that can help stop periods if bleeding does not stop with testosterone. If you stop taking testosterone you may begin ovulating and having bleeding again, although this can be different from person to person.