

# A Quick Q&A Sheet on Gender-Affirming Healthcare: PUBERTY BLOCKERS, HRT & SURGERY



Taking charge of your transition is a deeply personal journey. Whether you're exploring puberty blockers, hormone replacement therapy (HRT), or gender-affirming surgery, knowing your options can help you make informed decisions. Here's a breakdown of the most common questions about gender-affirming care.



## Puberty Blockers: Hitting Pause on Puberty



### Q: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PUBERTY BLOCKERS?

A: They help reduce gender dysphoria, lower anxiety and depression, and give you more time to decide if gender-affirming medical care is right for you.

### Q: WHAT ARE PUBERTY BLOCKERS?

A: Puberty blockers are medications that put puberty on hold, preventing changes like facial hair growth or breast development. They give you time to explore your gender identity without the stress of unwanted physical changes.

### Q: ARE THERE ANY RISKS?

A: The main concern is a temporary drop in bone density, which is why doctors may recommend calcium and vitamin D supplements. Regular check-ins with a healthcare provider can help monitor any side effects.

### Q: ARE PUBERTY BLOCKERS PERMANENT?

A: Nope! If you stop taking them, your body will continue puberty as it normally would, though sometimes at a delayed pace.

### Q: WHEN CAN SOMEONE START PUBERTY BLOCKERS?

A: Usually when they reach early puberty (Tanner Stage 2), which happens around ages 9-14.

## Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT): Aligning Your Body with Your Identity

### Q: WHAT IS HRT?

A: HRT helps your body develop physical traits that match your gender identity by introducing estrogen or testosterone.

### Q: WHAT CHANGES CAN I EXPECT FROM HRT?

A: If you take estrogen, expect softer skin, fat redistribution, breast growth, and reduced body hair. If you take testosterone, you'll notice a deeper voice, facial/body hair growth, and increased muscle mass.

**Q: IS HRT REVERSIBLE?**

A: Some changes, like voice deepening from testosterone, are permanent. Others, like fat distribution, may reverse if HRT is stopped.

**Q: ARE THERE ANY RISKS?**

A: Possible risks include blood clots (with estrogen) or increased red blood cell count (with testosterone). Regular medical checkups help manage these risks.

**Q: HOW LONG DOES HRT TAKE TO WORK?**

A: Some changes appear within months, but full effects take years. Estrogen changes take about 2-5 years, while testosterone effects can be noticeable within the first year.

**Q: IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STARTING HRT IN YOUR TEENS VS. AS AN ADULT?**

A: Yes! Research shows that starting HRT earlier can significantly lower rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. It also helps avoid some irreversible puberty changes that might not align with your gender identity. That said, people can still see major benefits from HRT no matter when they start.

**Gender-Affirming Surgery: Taking the Next Step**

**Q: WHAT IS GENDER-AFFIRMING SURGERY?**

A: These are surgeries that help match your physical appearance to your gender identity. Examples include top surgery (chest masculinization or breast augmentation), facial feminization, and bottom surgery (genital reconstruction).

**Q: DO I NEED SURGERY TO TRANSITION?**

A: Not at all! Transitioning looks different for everyone. Some people choose social transition (changing names, pronouns, or clothing), while others explore medical options like HRT or surgery. Your transition is your choice.

**Q: WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR GENDER-AFFIRMING SURGERY?**

A: It depends on the procedure, but most surgeons require a gender dysphoria diagnosis, letters of recommendation from mental health professionals, and sometimes a period of HRT beforehand.

**Q: DOES INSURANCE COVER GENDER-AFFIRMING SURGERY?**

A: It depends on your location and insurance plan. Some policies cover gender-affirming procedures, while others don't. Check with your provider to understand your options.



**Q: WHAT'S THE RECOVERY LIKE?**

A: Recovery varies by surgery. Some procedures, like top surgery, take a few weeks before you can return to daily activities, while others require more healing time. Your surgeon will give you a clear recovery plan.

## FYI To Those in Arizona:

### **Q: ARE MINORS ALLOWED TO UNDERGO GENDER-AFFIRMING SURGERIES IN ARIZONA?**

A: No, Arizona law prohibits physicians and healthcare professionals from performing gender-affirming surgeries on individuals under 18.

Read more:

<https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/55leg/2r/bills/sb1138p.htm>

### **Q: CAN MINORS IN ARIZONA ACCESS PUBERTY BLOCKERS AND HRT?**

A: As of March 2025, Arizona law does not prohibit healthcare professionals from prescribing puberty blockers or hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to individuals under 18. However, recent federal actions may impact access.

Read more:

<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/01/28/trump-gender-affirming-care-minors-00201092>

### **Q: DOES ARIZONA MEDICAID COVER GENDER-AFFIRMING SURGERIES FOR ADULTS?**

A: No, the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) explicitly excludes coverage for gender-affirming surgeries for individuals of all ages.

### **Q: DOES ARIZONA MEDICAID COVER PUBERTY BLOCKERS AND HRT FOR MINORS?**

A: Arizona's Medicaid program, AHCCCS, explicitly excludes coverage for gender-affirming treatments, including puberty blockers and HRT, for individuals of all ages.

