



Puberty blockers offer transgender and gender-diverse youth a way to pause puberty while exploring their gender identity. Research shows they improve mental health and reduce gender dysphoria. However, they come with potential side effects and require careful consideration with healthcare providers.

For Arizona residents, legal restrictions make understanding the process important. Families should consult medical and legal experts to ensure informed decisions. Connecting with local LGBTQ+ organizations can also provide valuable support and resources.

Every person's journey is unique, and gender-affirming care should focus on the individual's well-being, supported by knowledgeable healthcare providers and a strong support system.

WHAT ARE PUBERTY BLOCKERS?

Puberty blockers, or hormone blockers, are medications that temporarily pause puberty by blocking hormones like testosterone and estrogen. The most common types are:

- **Histrelin acetate:** A small rod implanted under the skin that lasts about a year.
- **Leuprolide acetate:** An injection that works for 1 to 4 months, depending on the formulation.

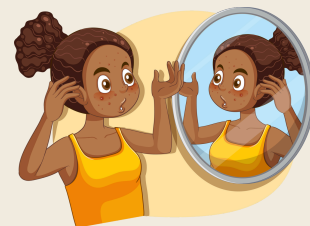


These medications stop the brain from signaling the ovaries or testes to produce puberty-related hormones. While they are not FDA-approved specifically for transgender care, they have been safely used for years in pediatric medicine.

HOW DO PUBERTY BLOCKERS WORK?

GnRH analogues (Gonadotropin-Releasing Hormone analogues) suppress the body's production of sex hormones, which prevents the development of secondary sex characteristics. This means:

- For youth assigned male at birth: Slows facial and body hair growth, prevents voice deepening, and limits genital development.
- For youth assigned female at birth: Prevents breast development and stops menstruation.



Doctors usually prescribe puberty blockers when a child has reached Tanner stage 2, the early phase of puberty. These medications are not used before puberty starts.

BENEFITS AND SIDE EFFECTS

BENEFITS

Research shows puberty blockers can:

- Improve mental health and reduce distress.
- Lower rates of depression, anxiety, and self-harm.
- Provide time for gender exploration without unwanted physical changes.
- Potentially reduce the need for gender-affirming surgeries later in life.



A 2022 study found that transgender youth who used puberty blockers had a 60% decrease in depression and a 73% decrease in suicidality (<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2788988>).

SIDE EFFECTS

Like any medication, puberty blockers have potential side effects:

- Common effects: Fatigue, headaches, hot flashes, and mood changes.
- Long-term use may affect height and body composition.
- Possible decrease in bone density, requiring monitoring and supplements.
- Potential fertility impacts if followed by gender-affirming hormone therapy.
- Limited research on possible effects on brain development.



Most side effects resolve when the medication is discontinued, but discussing risks with a healthcare provider is essential.

ACCESSING PUBERTY BLOCKERS IN ARIZONA

COST AND INSURANCE INFORMATION



The cost of puberty blockers can vary based on the type of medication, provider, and insurance coverage. Without insurance, the price can range from several hundred to thousands of dollars per dose. Some private insurance plans may cover puberty blockers, but Arizona's Medicaid program (AHCCCS) has restrictions on gender-affirming care. Families should check with their insurance providers and explore financial assistance programs through LGBTQ+ organizations and healthcare clinics.



LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Arizona laws impact access to gender-affirming care:

- **SB1138 (2022)** prohibits gender-affirming surgeries for minors but does not ban puberty blockers.
- **SB1451** requires written parental consent for puberty blockers.
- **Medicaid (AHCCCS)** has limitations on covering gender-affirming care.

Because laws are changing, consulting with informed healthcare providers and legal experts can help families navigate access to care.

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

To start puberty blockers, youth must:

- Have a medical assessment by gender health specialists.
- Reach Tanner stage 2 (early puberty).
- Undergo a biopsychosocial assessment.
- Be able to give informed consent.
- Obtain written parental/guardian consent, as required by Arizona law.



Family support plays a key role in mental health and access to treatment.

STOPPING PUBERTY BLOCKERS: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The effects of puberty blockers are reversible. If a young person stops treatment, there are two main options:

1. **Resuming Natural Puberty:** If they choose not to continue transitioning, puberty will restart after stopping blockers
2. **Starting Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy:** Many youth who affirm their gender identity begin hormone therapy after puberty blockers. In Arizona, hormone therapy is often available at age 18, but some providers may prescribe it earlier with parental consent.

FINDING A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

Finding a knowledgeable healthcare provider is essential. In Arizona, some Planned Parenthood locations, LGBTQ+ health clinics, and major hospitals offer gender-affirming care. Organizations like the **World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)** provide directories of trained providers. Additionally, local LGBTQ+ advocacy groups often maintain lists of trans-friendly doctors.



RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

If you or a loved one need additional guidance, here are some organizations that can help:

- Arizona Trans Youth and Parent Organization (AZTYPO) – Support and advocacy for trans youth and families. Website: <https://www.aztypo.org> – Support and advocacy for trans youth and families.
- Equality Arizona – Legal and community resources for LGBTQ+ residents. Website: <https://www.equalityarizona.org> – Legal and community resources for LGBTQ+ residents.
- Planned Parenthood Arizona – Gender-affirming care services. Website: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-arizona> – Gender-affirming care services.
- National Center for Transgender Equality – Updates on legal rights and healthcare access. Website: <https://transequality.org> – Updates on legal rights and healthcare access.
- Trevor Project – Crisis support for LGBTQ+ youth. Call: 866-488-7386. Website: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org> – Crisis support for LGBTQ+ youth.