



Patient Information Sheet: Testosterone-based gender-affirming hormone therapy

We will discuss all this information with you during your GAHT (Hormones) Prescription Session. We provide this information also as a document accessible via www.edennew.life so that you can refer to it whenever necessary.

Testosterone

Comes in two main preparations (gel or injections) and will provide the masculinising hormone. There is no evidence of a difference in masculinising outcomes between the different forms of testosterone; none of them work “better” or “quicker” than the others. Taking higher doses than prescribed does not cause masculinising changes to happen more quickly and can put your health at risk. Everyone starting on testosterone with Eden New Life will start on the gel preparation for safety reasons.

Once you and the Eden Specialists are happy that testosterone suits you and you do not experience any significant side effects, you could, if you wanted to, start on injections, such as the monthly Sustanon (which we can teach you how to self-administer) or the three monthly injections Nebido (this has to be given by a healthcare professional).

Side Effects and Risks

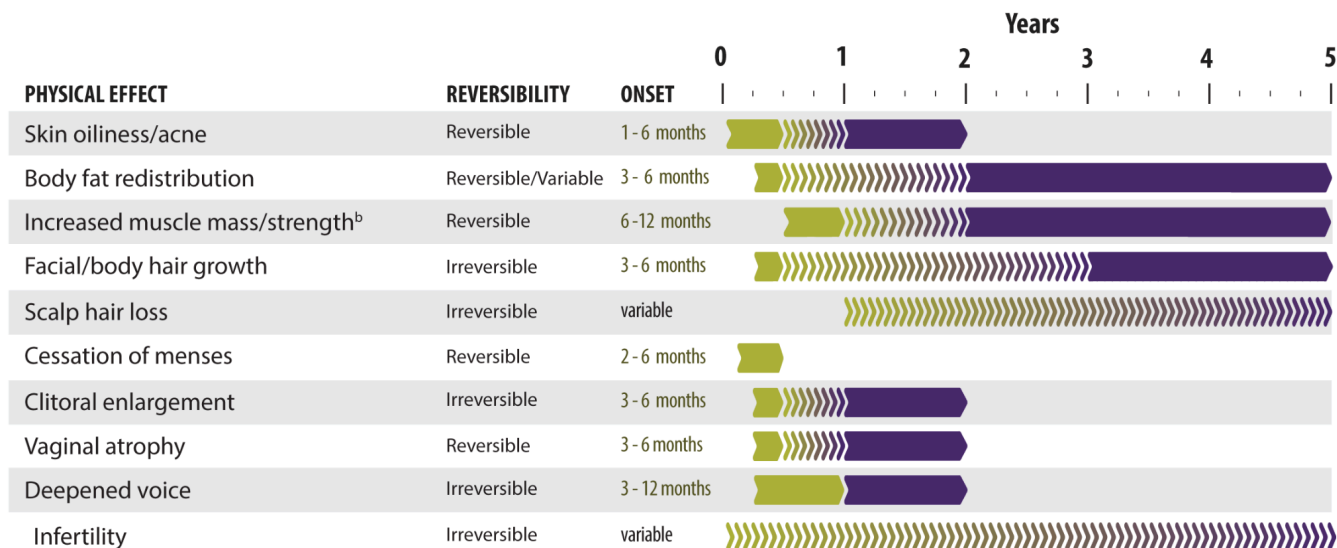
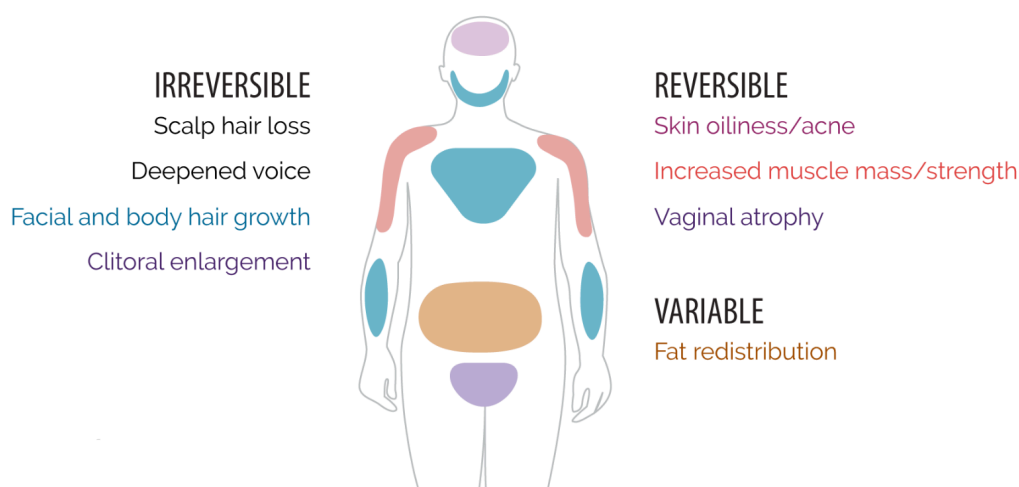
- Increased red blood cells; can thicken the blood increasing the risk of stroke or heart attack. We monitor this by asking you to have regular blood tests (see below).
- Possible risk of liver problems or raised cholesterol (again we monitor this by reviewing your blood results).
- There may be an increased risk of blood clots.
- The risk of health problems is higher if you smoke or if you are overweight.
- The full medical effects and long-term safety of taking testosterone for the purposes of transitioning are not known. For most people, the benefits outweigh the risks. Your own circumstances can impact on this risk; body size, smoking, and blood pressure can all increase your risk of complications.
- Potential risks of testosterone injections include pain and bruising at the injection site and infection. We will teach you how to reduce this risk. Nebido can rarely cause an oil embolism which is when a tiny amount of oil gets into the bloodstream; this is why it should be given by a health professional.

Expected Effects of the medication

Effects are gradual and timing does vary, but it can take years for the full effects to be seen. The effects are largely dependent on genetics and the age at which you start hormones, rather than the dose or the type of hormone preparation that you take. It is important that you have realistic expectations about the effects of hormones.

This is a link to a brilliant website that shows the following information pictorially: This image¹ shows the following information:

EFFECTS AND EXPECTED TIME COURSE OF A REGIMEN CONSISTING OF TESTOSTERONE



a) Estimates represent published and unpublished clinical observations
 b) Significantly dependent on amount of exercise

Expected Onset^a Expected Maximum Effect^a

¹. Copied from <https://teenhealthsource.com>. Effects and expected time course of a regimen consisting of testosterone. J.Frei, M.Kalensky, E.McIntosh, J.Mystkowski, E.Schwelnus, B.Shaw, H.Thompson, Gender Affirmation in Adult Primary Care, The Journal for Nurse Practitioners, Volume 15, Issue 10, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nurpra.2019.07.018>

Permanent changes include

- Deeper voice (your throat can sometimes feel scratchy at first before your voice starts to deepen).
- Increased hair growth on your body (variable but most often on your chest, back and arms)
- Facial hair (again, variable)
- Hair loss at the temples and male pattern baldness can occur
- Genital changes: your erectile tissue i.e. clitoris will grow around 1 to 3cm. This can be uncomfortable or even painful at first.

These changes are not permanent

- Oily skin and acne (acne is often worse when starting on testosterone and then settles)
- Redistribution of body fat (less on hips, bum and thighs)
- Increased muscle mass and upper body strength
- Increased sex drive
- Menstrual periods often stop after a month or so (if this does not happen and you need something to stop monthly bleeding, please speak to us here at Eden New Life)

Sex

Your sex drive may increase and your genitals, especially your erectile tissue (clitoris) will grow. This can make both having sex and having orgasms feel very different. Testosterone can cause the vagina to become dry and sore which can make sex feel uncomfortable. If this happens to you, please let us know here at Eden, or speak to your GP. Using lubricant or oestrogen cream in the vaginal area can help with these symptoms.

Fertility

The long-term effects of testosterone on fertility are not clear. Testosterone stops your ovaries from working and there is no scientific evidence showing whether this is reversible or not.

After stopping testosterone your fertility could return allowing you to become pregnant; we just do not have the data to advise you. If you do wish to become pregnant, you **must** stop taking testosterone, as this is harmful to a developing foetus. We do not know the exact length of time you need to stop taking it to ensure there is no harm caused - so please think hard about whether it is likely that you may want to become pregnant in the future.

It is important that you understand that testosterone is NOT a form of contraception. Even if you do not have monthly menstrual periods, if you have a womb and ovaries and are having vaginal sex with someone with a penis who produces sperm, you could become pregnant. Therefore please use contraception if you do not wish to become pregnant. Talk to us about this if you want, we can advise on different contraception methods.

Emotional Health

You may feel more emotional when commencing on testosterone. It is not known exactly how hormones will impact your mental health and it does vary between people. It is almost like you are going through a second puberty (but this time the one you want to go through!). You may experience a whole heap of emotions, or you may notice no change. Some people experience mood swings or feel anxious and depressed. Gender affirmation can be a stressful and emotional time regardless; please ensure that you have support and please know that you can reach out to us at Eden if you need to.

Cancer Screening

- **Breasts:** We recommend that anyone with breasts has a mammogram as part of the National Screening Service on the NHS. If you have had top surgery and the surgeon states that all the breast tissue was removed, you may not need to be included in the screening service.
- **Cervix:** Cervical screening is imperative for anyone with a cervix. If you have changed your gender marker with your GP, you may not automatically be contacted about this; please speak with your GP about this. The HPV vaccine greatly reduces your risk of cervical cancer - if you have not had this, again, please speak with your GP.

Blood Tests

We need you to have blood tests before you start any hormone medication. This is to ensure that you don't have any underlying medication conditions, i.e. that you are fit to start on medication and also to provide Eden New Life with your baseline blood levels.

Initial Baseline Blood Tests we insist on are:

- FBC, U&Es, LFTs
- Fasting Lipids
- HbA1c
- FSH, LH, Prolactin, SHBG, Oestradiol and Testosterone

If you have had these with eg your GP within the last two weeks we will accept those results and you do not need to obtain a new set of blood tests.

Follow-up blood tests

We insist on these every 3/12 for the first year, then every 6/12 once stable on a dose

- FBC, LFTs and testosterone (depending on which preparation you take, you will have to have the blood test at a slightly different time i.e if on testosterone gel, the blood test needs to be taken 4 to 6 hours after applying it. We will ensure that you understand when to have your blood test taken to ensure an accurate testosterone level is sought).

We also need you to tell us your **weight and blood pressure** twice a year.