



What Patients Should Know Before Starting Hormone Therapy (HRT) for Gender Dysphoria

Starting gender-affirming hormone therapy (HRT) can be a meaningful and life-changing step for many transgender and gender-diverse people. Hormones can help align physical characteristics with gender identity and may reduce symptoms of gender dysphoria.

However, HRT is more than simply starting a medication. It involves physical, emotional, and social changes that occur gradually over time. Taking time to prepare can help ensure a safer and more positive experience.

At **Harmony HRT Clinic**, we believe informed patients achieve the best outcomes. This guide outlines important considerations before starting treatment.

Safety, Stability, and Support

Medical care does not happen in isolation. Your overall environment and support system can play an important role in your health and well-being during transition.

Before starting HRT, consider the following:

Personal Safety

- Do you feel safe in your home environment?
- Are the people you live with supportive or respectful of your identity?
- Do you have a plan if living situations change?

Workplace and School

- Are you comfortable being open about your transition at work or school?
- Are you familiar with your local nondiscrimination protections?

Community and Resources

- Do you know what community resources are available locally?
- Are there LGBTQ+ organizations or support groups you can access?

Even if your environment is supportive, having backup plans can help ensure continuity of care if circumstances change.

Social Support

Strong social support is associated with better mental health and better treatment adherence.

Helpful forms of support may include:

- trusted friends or family members
- supportive coworkers or community members
- LGBTQ+ peer groups
- online communities
- mental health professionals

Even one supportive relationship can significantly reduce stress during transition.

Medical Readiness

Before starting HRT, it is important to establish ongoing medical care with a qualified provider.

Patients starting hormone therapy should expect:

- regular follow-up appointments
- laboratory monitoring, especially during the first year
- medication adjustments based on lab results and symptoms

Preventive care and screenings should be based on the **organs and anatomy you have**, regardless of gender identity.

Understanding Physical Changes

Hormone therapy causes **gradual physical changes**. These changes vary widely between individuals.

Factors that influence outcomes include:

- genetics
- age
- hormone levels
- overall health
- lifestyle factors

Changes usually occur slowly over months or years. Hormone therapy does not create instant results. It is also important to understand that **some changes are reversible, while others may be permanent**. Hormone therapy can reduce fertility and may lead to permanent infertility

Mental Health and Emotional Changes

Hormones can influence mood and emotional experiences. Many people experience emotional shifts during the early months of treatment.

Hormone therapy is **not an antidepressant or cure-all for mental health concerns**. However, for some individuals, the physical changes associated with HRT may help reduce gender dysphoria.

Maintaining overall wellness is important during transition. Helpful habits include:

- adequate sleep
- balanced nutrition
- physical activity
- stress management
- emotional support

Tracking mood and physical changes can also help guide treatment adjustments.

Fertility Considerations

Hormone therapy may affect fertility.

Some changes to fertility may be **permanent**, even if hormones are later discontinued.

Patients who may want biological children in the future may wish to consider:

- sperm banking
- egg preservation
- embryo preservation

These options should ideally be discussed **before starting hormones**.

Planning for Long-Term Care

Hormone therapy is often a **long-term medical treatment**.

To maintain stable care:

- keep follow-up appointments
- complete recommended lab work
- request medication refills before running out
- inform your provider about any side effects or concerns

Stopping hormone therapy suddenly without medical guidance is **not** recommended. If you ever decide to stop treatment, your provider can help you do so safely.

When to Contact Your Provider

You should contact your provider if you experience:

- concerning symptoms
- unexpected side effects
- difficulty obtaining medications
- changes in your goals for treatment

Open communication helps ensure your care remains safe and effective.

Gender-affirming hormone therapy is one part of a person's overall health and well-being.

Successful treatment is supported by:

- stable living conditions
- access to healthcare
- emotional support
- realistic expectations

Some people consider hormone therapy for many years before starting. There is no 'too late' or 'too old.'

At **Harmony HRT Clinic**, our goal is to provide compassionate, evidence-based care and support patients at every stage of their journey.

If you have questions about whether hormone therapy is right for you, our team is here to help.

Additional Considerations: Reflecting on Your Goals for Hormone Therapy

The questions below are simply invitations to think about your life, your goals, and the support systems around you. You may wish to write down your thoughts, discuss them with a trusted person, or talk about them with your healthcare provider.

Exploring Support Systems

- Tell me about the people who support you right now.
- Who do you feel safe talking to about your transition?
- Are there any challenges in your living or work environment we should consider?

Understanding Expectations

- What changes from hormone therapy feel most important to you?

- Are there specific outcomes you're hoping for?
- What have you heard about hormone therapy so far?
- explore understanding of: timelines - reversible vs irreversible changes - limitations of hrt

Medical Readiness

- Do you have any medical conditions we should discuss before starting treatment?
- How comfortable are you with ongoing monitoring and lab work?
- Do you foresee any barriers to taking medication regularly?

Emotional Wellbeing

- How have you been feeling emotionally about your gender journey?
- Have you had support from counseling or peer groups?
- Are there any fears or concerns you want to talk through?

Future Orientation

- When you imagine your life a few years from now, what feels most important?
- What kind of relationships or roles do you hope to have?
- What would feeling successful in your transition look like for you?
- Is there anything you're uncertain about that you should explore further?
- What questions do you have about hormone therapy or the transition process?