

## INFORMED CONSENT FOR FEMINIZING HORMONE THERAPY

The use of hormone therapy for gender transition/affirmation is based on many years of experience treating trans persons. Research on hormone therapy is providing us with more and more information on its safety and efficacy, but all of the long-term consequences and effects of hormone therapy may not yet be fully understood.

This informed consent asks you to consider both the expected benefits of hormone therapy, as well as the possible risks and side effects of hormone therapy, so that you can decide, with your medical provider, if hormone therapy is right for you. The purpose of this form is to guide a discussion between you and your medical provider or another member of the medical team, so you can understand how these benefits and risks apply to you personally.

By taking an **Androgen blockers (usually spironolactone)**, you will reduce the masculine features of your body by decreasing the amount of and/or block the effect of testosterone. The physical effects of making this hormone change are discussed in more detail below.

By taking **Estrogen (usually estradiol)**, you will feminize your body and possibly; decrease the amount and effect of testosterone you currently have in your body. The physical effects of making this hormone change are discussed in more detail below.

Your medical provider will determine the form of estrogen (pills, patches, gels or shots) and the dose that is best for you. Each individual person responds to hormone therapy differently, and it is difficult to predict how each person will respond.

### **Warning --- who should not take estrogen?**

It should not be used by anyone who has a history of an estrogen-dependent cancer (most commonly breast cancer).

It should be used with caution and only after a full discussion of risks by anyone who:

- Has migraines or seizures
- Smokes cigarettes
- Has had blood clots that could or did travel to the lungs (pulmonary embolism, DVT)
- Has a strong family history of breast cancer or other cancers that grow quicker when estrogens are present
- Has kidney or liver disease
- Has heart disease or heart valve problems

## **The Expected Effects of Feminizing Hormone Therapy**

The feminizing changes in the body may take several months to become noticeable and usually take up to 3 to 5 years to be complete.

Changes that are **PERMANENT** and will not go away completely, even if you decide to stop hormone therapy

- Breast growth and development
- The testicles will get smaller and softer
- The testicles will produce less sperm, and you may become infertile (unable to get someone pregnant); how long this takes to happen and become permanent varies greatly from person to person

Changes that are **NOT PERMANENT** and will likely reverse if hormone therapy is stopped:

- Loss of muscle mass and decreased strength, particularly in the upper body
- Weight gain. If you gain weight, this fat will tend to go to the buttocks, hips and thighs, rather than the abdomen and mid-section, making the body look more feminine
- Skin may become softer and acne may decrease
- Facial and body hair will get softer and lighter and grow more slowly; usually, this effect is not sufficient, and people may choose to have other treatments (electrolysis or laser therapy) to remove unwanted hair
- Male pattern baldness of the scalp may slow down or stop, but hair will generally not regrow
- Reduced sex drive
- Decreased strength of erections or inability to get an erection. The ejaculate will become thinner and watery and there will be less of it.
- Changes in mood or thinking may occur; you may find that you have increased emotional reactions to things, however most people find that their mental health improves after starting hormone therapy. The effects of hormones on the brain are not fully understood.

Hormone therapy will not change the bone structure of the face or body; your Adam's apple will not shrink; the pitch of your voice will not automatically change. If necessary, other treatments are available to help with these things.

## **The Risks and Possible Side Effects of Androgen Blockers (Spironolactone)**

- Increased urine production and needing to urinate more frequently; possible changes in kidney function
- A drop in blood pressure and feeling lightheaded
- Increased thirst
- Increase in the potassium in the blood and in your body; this can lead to muscle weakness, nerve problems and dangerous heart arrhythmias (irregular heart rhythm)

## **The Risks and Possible Side Effects of Estrogen Therapy**

- The testicles will produce less testosterone which can affect overall sexual function. Sperm may not mature which can result in loss of fertility (inability to get someone pregnant). Even after stopping hormone therapy, the ability to make healthy sperm may not come back. How long this takes to become permanent is difficult to predict. Some people choose to bank some of their sperm before starting hormone therapy.
- There is typically a decrease in morning and spontaneous erections. Erections may not be firm enough for penetrative sex. Libido may decrease. Additional medications may be prescribed to retain sexual function if desired.
- Because the effect on sperm production is hard to predict, you may still be able to get someone pregnant. You or your partner should consider the use of birth control to prevent pregnancy if applicable.
- Increased risk of developing blood clots; blood clots in the legs or arms (DVT) can cause pain and swelling; blood clots to the lungs (pulmonary embolus) can interfere with breathing and getting oxygen to the body; blood clots in the arteries of the heart can cause heart attacks; blood clots in the arteries of the brain can cause a stroke. Blood clots to the lungs, heart or brain could result in death.
- Possible increased risk of having cardiovascular disease, a heart attack or stroke. This risk may be higher if you smoke cigarettes, are over 45, or if you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, or a family history of cardiovascular disease
- Possible increase in blood pressure; this might require medication for treatment.
- Nausea and vomiting especially when starting estrogen therapy.
- Increased risk of gallbladder disease and gallstones.
- Possible inflammation of the liver which could lead to liver disease.
- May cause or worsen headaches and migraines.
- May cause elevated levels of prolactin (a hormone made by the pituitary gland); a few people on estrogen for hormone therapy have developed prolactinomas, a benign tumor of the pituitary gland that can cause headaches and vision trouble.
- There may be a milky discharge from the breast (galactorrhea). This can be caused by taking estrogen or by an underlying medical condition. It is advised to check with a doctor to determine the cause.
- May worsen depression or cause mood swings.
- May increase the risk of breast cancer.

### **You understand that:**

- Smoking may greatly increase the risks of taking hormone therapy, especially the risk of blood clots and cardiovascular disease. If you smoke, you should try to cut back or quit. If you have other risks for blood clots or cardiovascular disease, your provider may ask you to quit smoking before you start on hormone therapy.
- Taking estrogen in doses that are higher than recommended by your doctor will increase your risk of side effects and may not produce better feminizing effects.
- You may need to stop taking hormones for a few weeks before and after any surgery.
- Suddenly stopping estrogen treatment after you have been on it for a long time may have negative health effects, however you may choose to stop taking hormone therapy at any time or for any reason. You are encouraged to discuss this decision with your medical provider.
- Your provider may decrease the dose of estrogen or androgen blockers or stop prescribing hormone therapy because of medical reasons and/or safety concerns; you can expect that the medical provider will discuss the reasons for all treatment decisions with you.
- Hormone therapy is not the only way that a person may appear more feminine and live as a female; your medical provider and/or a mental health provider can help you think about these other options.
- If you have experienced harassment, your medical or mental health providers are available to find advocacy and support resources.

### **You agree to**

- Take androgen blockers and/or estrogens only at the dosage and in the form that your medical provider prescribes.
- Inform your medical provider if you are taking or start taking any other medications (including dietary supplement or herbs) or street drugs or alcohol so that you can discuss possible interactions with and effects on your hormone treatment
- Inform your medical provider of any new physical symptoms or any medical conditions that may develop before or while you are taking hormone therapy.
- Keep regular follow up appointments. We may advise mammograms and prostate exams, when applicable.
- Have regular monitoring blood testing done; your provider will discuss with you what tests are necessary in order to monitor for potential harmful effects and to ensure that your hormone therapy is safe and effective

**By signing this form you acknowledge:**

You have been given adequate information to be able to make an informed decision about undergoing hormone replacement therapy:

You understand the information your medical provider has given you;

You have been given an opportunity to ask any questions regarding the contents of this form or the treatment you are about to undertake;

You are voluntarily undertaking this treatment;

You are at least 18 years of age.

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Patient Name (please print)

Date of Birth

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Patient Signature

Date

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Prescribing Clinician Signature

Date

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Adapted from: Student Health, University of California, Santa Barbara. February 2019

Adapted from: Endocrine Therapy for Transgender Adults in British Columbia: Suggested Guidelines; Physical Aspects of Transgender Endocrine Therapy. January 2006

WPATH Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming People. Version 7; 2012.