

What to Expect in the Gender Health Clinic

The Children's Wisconsin Gender Health Clinic is an interdisciplinary clinic staffed by pediatric endocrinologists, a pediatric nurse practitioner, pediatric nurse, and pediatric health psychologist. We hope to work with you to develop the best and safest care plan for your child. The timelines for care delivery will be thoughtfully based on your child's health care needs, your understanding of treatment, and goals for transition. Our criteria for hormone therapy is informed by the WPATH (World Professional Association for Transgender Health), Endocrine Society, and American Psychological Association guidelines.

Our primary goal for the first visit to our clinic is to provide information and child specific guidelines.

It is important to know that gender-affirming hormones (i.e., testosterone or estrogen) will not be prescribed or administered at your child's first visit to our clinic. Please communicate this with your child in advance of the appointment. We will discuss specific criteria for initiating gender-affirming hormone therapy, which includes:

1. A written "letter of support" from a knowledgeable mental health provider
2. Reasonable control of any medical and mental health problems your child may have
3. The support and informed written consent of the child's legal guardian(s)

Once these criteria are met, we can work to quickly start hormones at a follow-up clinic visit, usually within a few weeks.

If appropriate, pubertal blockers may be prescribed at the first visit. Before pubertal blockers are started, we will have a full discussion of risks and benefits and set expectations moving forward. We do not require a letter of support from a mental health provider to start pubertal blockers, but we will strongly encourage on-going care with a mental health provider.

Clinical visit for children who have not started puberty or are in the early/mid stages of puberty

1st Visit:

- The medical providers will get to know you and your child. We will review medical history and family health history. We will ask about your goals for medical therapy. We will review hormone therapy options, including puberty blocking medications. We will perform a physical exam, including a brief puberty examination, and may recommend blood tests or imaging studies. If appropriate, we may recommend initiation of pubertal blockers.
- Our pediatric health psychologist will meet with you to gather health information related to your child's mental health and gender identity development. The psychologist may also discuss family, school and social life. If your child has a therapist, we may ask for permission to communicate with him/her/them. If your child does not have a therapist, we can help connect you with one. It will be important to establish care with a mental health provider over time.
- Based on the plan we establish at this visit, we will arrange for follow-up visits. Any medical interventions will be closely followed with necessary labs and examinations to make sure goals are being achieved in a safe way.

Clinic visits for children who have already gone through puberty

1st Visit:

- We will get to know you and your child. We will review medical history and family health history. We will discuss your expectations and goals. We will review the options of hormone therapy, including risks and benefits. Reversible and irreversible aspects of hormone therapy will be discussed openly. We will perform a physical exam, including a brief puberty examination, and may recommend blood tests or imaging studies.
- Our pediatric health psychologist will see you to gather health information related to your child's mental health and gender identity development. The psychologist may also discuss family, school and social life. If your child or teen has a therapist, we may ask permission to communicate with him/her/they. If your child or teen does not have a therapist, we can help connect you to one.
- Based on the plan we establish together, follow-up appointments will be recommended.

Common Questions and Concerns

Why do I need to see a therapist before starting hormone therapy? I feel fine.

Guidelines from WPATH and the Endocrine Society currently require a letter of support from a knowledgeable mental health provider before hormone therapy can start. This is especially important in children and adolescents. Any mental health concerns, such as depression or anxiety, need to be reasonably well managed. A thorough evaluation is necessary to ensure you and your family have had an opportunity to consider and discuss the benefits and risk involved in hormone treatment as well as to develop a plan to support you during the process. Counseling and medications may help support you through potential ups and downs during the transition process.

Why does it take so long to start hormones?

We need confirmation that you and your parent(s)/guardian(s) understand the risks and benefits of hormone therapy and you, your mental health provider, and your medical provider have all decided this is the appropriate time for you to begin treatment. We take the time to ensure we are providing the most comprehensive and safest care possible.

How often do I need to see you?

Children on gender-affirming hormones are required to see us every 3 months for the first year of therapy and every 6 months thereafter. Children on pubertal blockers are required to see us every 3-6 months. Children who are not yet in puberty may opt to see us every 6-12 months to monitor for the beginning of puberty, so we can intervene if/when needed.

Thank you for entrusting us with the care of your child. We look forward to meeting you at your upcoming appointment.