

The following provides an overview about medical options that are available for youth and adults, and may be needed by some trans youth as they age.

While children do not access medical interventions before puberty, and many will not require this level of care as they grow older, many children and families find it helpful to have access to this information so they can understand their options and plan for the future.

Knowing that there are medical options to align one's body with one's gender can help prevent or relieve anxiety about pubertal changes.



## Gender goals

Each person's relationship to their body and their need for gender-affirming care is unique. Beyond social affirmation, three gender-affirming medical options are available that may be necessary for gender affirmation or transition. These are puberty blockers, hormone therapy, and gender-affirming surgeries. People may access all, some, or none of these options according to their gender goals.

## Health care providers

Youth and families interested in learning more about puberty blockers, hormone therapy, or gender-affirming surgeries should talk to a health care provider who is trained in providing this care. They can learn more about their options and create a care plan that will help them meet the youth's individual gender goals.

## Puberty blockers

The changes that happen in the body during puberty can be distressing if they are not in line with a young person's gender. Puberty blockers can help relieve this distress by delaying puberty. Puberty blockers can be started once puberty begins, but may also be prescribed for youth who are already part way through puberty.

Puberty blockers give youth more time to explore their gender identity, before changes happen to their body that can't be reversed. It can allow more time for a youth and family to carefully consider future care. Using puberty blockers does not mean that a youth has to start hormone therapy later on.

## Hormone therapy

For someone who experiences discomfort or distress because their gender and the sex they were assigned at birth are different, hormone therapy may provide significant comfort by helping them to feel more at ease in their body.

Hormone therapy is used to make secondary sex characteristics more masculine, more feminine, or more androgynous. The hormone estrogen (often combined with other medications) can be used to feminize the body. The hormone testosterone can be used to masculinize the body. Either can be used in lower doses or temporarily to achieve a more androgynous effect.

Medications used by youth are generally the same ones used by adults. Hormone therapy can be considered whether they have used puberty blockers or not. There is no specific age at which hormone therapy is started in British Columbia. This is determined based on the individual needs of each youth.

## Gender-affirming surgeries

Some people do not need surgery, others may need one or more. This depends on each person's gender health goals. Most surgeries are performed after someone turns 18. However, there are youth who are ready for chest surgery before they turn 18.

There are many kinds of gender-affirming surgeries. Some change the appearance of the face, neck, (tracheal shave or facial feminization surgery), the upper torso (breast or chest surgery), or the lower body (vaginoplasty, metoidioplasty, phalloplasty). Some of the lower body surgeries involve removing organs necessary for reproduction, such as the ovaries, uterus, or testes.

## Further Information:

For further information, visit the Trans Care BC [website](#) or connect with a Trans Care BC [health navigator](#) about resources, services, and gender-affirming care providers who can help answer your questions.

Website: [www.transcarebc.ca](http://www.transcarebc.ca)

Health Navigation Team:

- Phone: 604-675-3647
- Toll-free (within BC): 1-866-999-1514
- Email: [transcareteam@phsa.ca](mailto:transcareteam@phsa.ca)