

Feminising hormones – Oestrogens

Oestrogen is commonly used for gender transition.

Oestrogen comes in many formulations including tablets, patches, gels and implants.

Oestrogen causes feminising effects such as breast growth, more curvy body shape and softer skin.

Oestrogen medication is generally safe when prescribed under medical supervision.

It's important to have regular check ups and blood tests when taking hormones.

It is important to quit smoking if you take oestrogen.

What changes will happen if I take oestrogen?

Within a few weeks..

Calmer mood, decreased libido (sex drive), less erections, softer skin.

Within a few months..

Body fat redistribution (more curvy body shape with body fat on hips and thighs), reduced muscle bulk and power, breast tenderness and swelling.

Longer term..

Breast growth (may take 2-3 years), reduction in size of penis and testicles, reduced facial and body hair, slowing of male pattern baldness, infertility.

Possible side effects of oestrogen

Side effects of oestrogen are similar to the oral contraceptive (birth control) pill. Oestrogen may cause nausea and weight gain. Gallstones are more likely in people taking oestrogen. Oestrogen can cause serious side effects such as blood clots and liver damage - however these side effects are rare. Some people experience mood swings on oestrogen. Generally mental health improves for most people when they commence hormone therapy. Infertility is likely when taking oestrogen, talk to your GP about freezing sperm prior to starting hormones.

Do I need to quit smoking?

YES! Oestrogen + smoking can be dangerous - there is a high risk of stroke and blood clots. Talk to your GP if you need any help with quitting smoking.

Which oestrogen should I take?

The most commonly prescribed oestrogen in Australia is progynova (oestradiol valerate) tablets.

Commonly prescribed oestrogen preparations are summarised below.

Progynova tablets: Most people take 6-8mg (3-4 tablets a day), usually starting with one a day and gradually increasing the dose under medical supervision.

Microgynon 50 pill: Usually 1 a day. There may be a higher blood clot risk with this product compared to oestradiol (progynova). Contains progesterone.

Climara patch: Oestradiol patch, replace weekly. Oestrogen absorbs through the skin.

Estraderm /estradot: Oestradiol patch, replace every 3-4 days.

Sandrena gel: Daily oestrogen topical gel, usually 1 sachet per day.

Oestradiol injections: Compounded oestradiol is available from certain pharmacies in Australia but levels vary and this preparation is not recommended.

Oestradiol implants: Difficult to access in Australia.

Will oestrogen affect my fertility?

Oestrogen can cause permanent infertility – it is strongly recommended to freeze sperm prior to starting oestrogen therapy. Your GP can help you organise this.

Monitoring oestrogen levels

Your GP will let you know how often to come in for a check up and blood test.

Generally check ups are 3 monthly initially, and 6 monthly in the longer term.

We often aim for oestradiol levels around 300-600 (in the female range).

Non binary clients may desire lower levels, speak to your GP for further advice.

Will oestrogen change my voice?

Oestrogen therapy does not change voice – speech therapy can be organised if you are interested in “Voice feminisation” therapy.

Will oestrogen therapy reduce my testosterone levels?

Oestrogen alone may suppress testosterone levels, but often not to desired level, consider adding in antiandrogen.

What happens if I stop taking oestrogen?

You can stop oestrogen at any time. Many of the changes are reversible. For example if you stop oestrogen you will notice your body shape will become less curvy. Erections will usually return.

Some of the changes are irreversible - for example shrinkage of penis and testicles can be permanent, and lowered sperm count (infertility) is common and permanent.

Should I take extra precautions when I fly long distance?

There is a higher risk of deep vein thrombosis (blood clot in calf muscles) when taking oestrogen.

Therefore when flying long distance it is recommended to avoid alcohol, stay well hydrated, walk regularly around the plane, and consider flight stockings (talk to your pharmacist)

Do I need to tell my other Doctors I'm taking oestrogen?

It's important to let your treating Doctors and Specialists know about all medications you are taking. There's a risk of interactions with other medications, and there are special circumstances when you may be required to stop your oestrogen hormone (for example when going in for surgery).

Is oestrogen expensive?

No. Oestrogen tablets, patches and gels are covered by Medicare.

I'm already taking oestrogen (self-medding). Will my Doctor be angry about this?

It's important to let your Doctor know about any medications you are taking. You won't be in trouble!! The GP will give you advice about whether the hormones you are taking are safe, and they can monitor levels to prevent any complications.

Do I need a mammogram?

Everyone with breasts should attend for 2 yearly mammograms from age 50y-69y. This can be organised through BREASTSCREEN – call 13 20 50. If there is a family history of breast cancer please talk to your GP about appropriate screening.

Where can I get more information?

Make an appointment with one of the Equinox GPs by calling us on

03 9416 2889 or existing patients can book online via our website or Facebook page.