

# Porterbrook Clinic

Sheffield Care Trust

## Support with **Gender Dysphoria**

### Oestrogens

Information for Users of our service

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### ***Why do I need to take hormones?***

All humans have hormones appropriate to their birth gender. You will therefore need to take hormones to re-assign to your chosen gender.

### ***What changes to my body can I expect to see?***

You will see an enlargement of your breasts and the size varies individually. As a result of taking oestrogens, your testicles will decrease in size, as will your sperm count, which could make you irretrievably infertile and you may also find it difficult to get an erection and achieve orgasm. You could also find a reduction in hair growth on your face and body and the fat in the body may redistribute so that you have a more feminine shape.

### ***Gamete Storage***

You may wish to consider asking us to arrange storage of sperm. This is not funded by all Health Authorities. If this is a concern, please feel free to discuss it with your doctor or at the clinic.

### ***Are there any side-effects to taking hormones and are they dangerous to my health?***

Although oestrogens have been used for several years, the possible long-term effects are not known. You will need to sign a form to consent with this treatment, after weighing up the possible harmful effects against the advantages to you. You may or may not experience any of the following side-effects:- nausea and vomiting, headaches, dizziness, weight gain, water retention, rise in blood pressure, skin changes such as rashes or acne, breast discomfort or tingling nipples are all common; less common side-effects include raised lipid levels, blood clots, liver tumour, depression or mental health problems.

It is very important that you inform the doctor prescribing the hormones of any past or current family and personal medical problems, especially a history of thrombosis or clots or breast cancer.

### ***What should I do if I experience any problems or if I have any worries or concerns whilst taking hormones?***

Some side-effects of hormone therapy are life-threatening and you therefore

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should not hesitate to contact your General Practitioner (GP) if you experience any side-effects whilst taking hormone treatment. You may also wish to contact the Gender Clinic for advice.

**If you experience pain or discomfort in your calf, chest pain, breathlessness or headaches, do not delay in seeing your doctor.**

### *How long will it take for me to see a change in my appearance?*

Changes vary individually and the time involved also varies. Some changes may occur within 6-8 weeks such as tingling sensations or discomfort around the nipples, whereas development of breast tissue may take 12-18 months to be noticeable.

### *How long do I need to take hormones for?*

Hormones need to be taken for life, even after surgery is complete. The dose of hormones is usually lower after surgery.

### *How is the medication given?*

There are a variety of different drugs and these can be taken in a number of ways (e.g. as tablets, patches or gel). The

choice depends on individual needs. Your doctor at the clinic will prescribe hormones and the dose will be adjusted for you.

**It is dangerous to take hormones which are not prescribed by a doctor or at a dose higher than prescribed.**

### *Can I stop taking hormones prescribed to me at any time and will this be harmful?*

Generally, stopping hormone medication will reverse the side-effects and you can do so at any time without any harm to you. However, if you stop, the feminine characteristics will gradually disappear. You may wish to seek advice from your doctor or the clinic before discontinuing the medication.

### *Can I develop breast cancer?*

Yes. Both men and women can develop breast cancer, although it is much less common in men. However, taking hormones could increase this risk. It is important that you discuss this with your doctor, who will look at your family medical history and the options available to you for screening for breast cancer. There are leaflets available at the clinic which contain advice about what to do

and what to look for which you might find helpful.

### ***What is breast awareness?***

Breast awareness is becoming familiar with your breasts, what they look and feel like and being able to know what is normal for you. This will help you to be aware of any changes, should these happen, you should report them right away. You should tell your doctor without delay if you experience any changes in the outline or shape of the breast, which is other than desired breast development, any discomfort or pain in the breast, any nipple discharge or change in the nipple position, or any lumps, thickening or bumpy areas. Please see the separate leaflet (G5) about breast awareness.

### ***What monitoring will take place?***

We will check various levels of hormones in your blood as well as other blood tests including liver function tests every 3-6 months whilst you are prescribed hormones. Routine blood pressure and weight checks will be carried out at each clinic visit. You will also be offered an examination regularly

by a clinic doctor or your GP to check on the progress and changes expected from the hormones.

### ***Where can I get further information?***

Please feel free to ask any of the staff in the Gender Clinic.