

Adult gender affirming health care at Swedish Health Services

Overview

Swedish offers adult gender affirming services through our primary care group, which includes family medicine, internal medicine, and obstetrics & gynecology. Patients work with their primary care clinicians to identify their goals for gender affirmation along with additional medical needs. Our gender affirming clinicians' goal is to hear what patients need and to center their journeys. The decisions to pursue their goals are ultimately up to our patients informed by their experiences and recommendations from their clinicians to help aid our communities on their journey in the safest ways possible. Our teams are further supported by endocrinologists for patients with a more complex medical history, a transgender health care navigator to assist in referrals and access to community resources, and a behavioral health team for short-term assistance, if needed.

Swedish provides gender affirming health care using the model of Informed Consent for Access to Transgender Health Care (ICATH – www.icath.info).

What to expect

Patients already on hormonal therapy

This is a great opportunity to meet with your primary care team to establish care. You may be asked to sign a Release of Information form to review your previous records unless we're able to access them through our electronic health record system. Your primary care clinician will review your medical history and provide whatever support you require to continue your gender affirmation journey. You will also discuss the medications you're currently taking, including any supplements.

Patients seeking to initiate gender affirming health care and services

In addition to establishing care with your new primary care team, your clinician will review your goals (which may not include hormone therapy) and help identify whatever resources you need to support you in your affirmation. Your team may ask you to fill out a Release of Information form to review your previous medical records to provide you comprehensive care. It'll be important to share your medical history with your clinician including medications and supplements you are taking. Your clinician will provide information to help support you in making informed decisions and may provide additional referrals such as making an appointment with our transgender health care navigator. Your team may also order some blood work and other tests for further evaluation. We may also need to refer you to other specialists if you have other chronic conditions which need to be optimized prior to starting hormonal therapy. Our goal is to never be a barrier to access gender affirming healthcare but to provide you the care you seek in the safest way possible.

Your clinician will discuss options when it comes to dosing and how you prefer to administer your hormone therapy. The effects of hormone therapy vary and depend on genetics and the age when you start hormone therapy. The changes you desire may take months or even years as your body is essentially going through a second puberty. Many changes are happening behind the scenes even before any physical changes develop. We may make recommendations

to limit dosing or increase dosing at slower paces based upon your goals, medical history and blood levels. This isn't meant to act as a gatekeeper but to support your journey as safely as possible.

Please note insurance may require a prior authorization to cover any hormonal therapy. This may result in a delay in accessing therapies and the primary care team will do its best to get it covered in the quickest way possible. Insurances may also cover certain formulations and administration options (patches vs injectable vs pills vs topical creams/ointments depending on the hormone type). We'll do our best to get you the type you seek.

Follow up visits

You will need to follow up with your clinician to check in to monitor how you're doing with hormonal therapy. These visits may involve checking in to see if you're having any side effects or to check in on hormone levels to make sure we're providing your affirmation therapies in the safest manner. Your clinician is also an available resource to access gender-affirming surgical procedures and may refer you to Swedish's transgender health care navigator for additional support. Please be mindful you are welcome to schedule additional visits to address other concerns, as well!

As your hormone levels stabilize, the frequency of visits will decrease and likely go to annual checks. These may be done with your annual physical exams. At these annual exams, your clinician may offer recommendations for certain health care maintenance items based upon the organs and tissues present from birth or from hormonal/surgical affirming therapies. We will work with you to provide these services and screenings in the most inclusive way possible guided by your comfort level.