



HRT AND GENDER-AFFIRMING SURGERIES: GUIDE FOR TRANS AND NONBINARY PEOPLE IN ARIZONA



WHAT'S GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE?

Gender-affirming care helps people align their bodies with their gender identity, whether they are trans, nonbinary, or anywhere else on the gender spectrum. It includes medical, psychological, and social support to help trans folks live as their true selves. Studies show that gender-affirming care majorly improves mental and physical health.

Your journey is personal, and different options work for different people. Some people go for:

- Therapy or support groups
- Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)
- Surgery (only for adults in Arizona due to legal restrictions)

Arizona has specific laws that affect trans healthcare. A 2022 law (SB 1138) bans gender-affirming surgeries for minors, but puberty blockers and HRT are still legal for people under 18.

HRT VS. SURGERY: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Both HRT and surgery help people align their physical traits with their gender identity, but they're totally different processes.

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

HRT uses estrogen or testosterone to create changes in the body that better match your identity.

- For trans women & transfeminine folks: Estrogen helps with breast growth, redistributes body fat, softens skin, and slows body hair growth.
- For trans men & transmasculine folks: Testosterone deepens the voice, increases body/facial hair, stops periods, and builds muscle.
- Some changes (like voice deepening and breast growth) are permanent, while others are reversible if HRT is stopped.

Gender-Affirming Surgery

Surgical procedures make permanent physical changes.

- **For trans women & transfeminine folks:** Options include breast augmentation, vaginoplasty, and facial feminization surgery.
- **For trans men & transmasculine folks:** Common surgeries include top surgery (chest reconstruction) and genital reconstruction.

- In Arizona, surgeries are **only available to adults** because of state law restrictions. However, some states have protections that allow minors to access gender-affirming surgeries. States like New York and Oregon have 'shield' laws that protect both patients and providers from legal repercussions for seeking or offering gender-affirming care. Families considering out-of-state surgical options should consult legal professionals to fully understand the risks and legal implications.

HRT: WHAT TO EXPECT AND WHEN

HRT takes time to show effects, and results depend on factors like age, dosage, and genetics. Here's a general idea of when changes kick in:

Estrogen (For Transfeminine Folks)

- **3-6 months:** Softer skin, body fat redistribution, breast growth starts
- **6-12 months:** Muscle mass decreases, body hair slows down
- **2-5 years:** Final breast development, more fat redistribution
- **Heads up:** Estrogen won't change your voice, voice training can help with that.

Testosterone (For Transmasculine Folks)

- **1-6 months:** Oiler skin, voice starts deepening, body hair increases
- **3-6 months:** Facial hair begins, periods usually stop
- **6-12 months:** Muscle mass increases, body fat shifts
- **1-5 years:** Continued hair growth, deeper voice settles

Some people stay on HRT for life, while others stop after reaching their desired changes. Regular check-ins with a doctor are key for health and hormone balance.

BUSTING MYTHS ABOUT GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE

Myth: Gender-affirming care is unsafe and experimental.

- **Reality:** Gender-affirming care is backed by decades of medical research and is totally safe when done under a doctor's care.

Myth: Kids are getting surgeries.

- **Reality:** Arizona bans gender-affirming surgeries for minors. Even in states where it's legal, surgery is rarely an option for young people.

Myth: Most trans people regret transitioning.

- **Reality:** Less than 1% of people regret gender-affirming care. Most experience major improvements in mental health and quality of life.

Myth: Being trans is just a phase.

- **Reality:** Gender identity is stable from a young age. If someone's trans, they've usually known for a long time.

GETTING GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE IN ARIZONA

Arizona's legal landscape makes things tricky, but there are still options. Minors can still access puberty blockers and HRT with the right medical support.

Where to Find Help:

- **PFLAG Arizona** – Provides support groups, healthcare referrals, and resources for LGBTQ+ individuals and their families. [Visit: <https://pflag.org/chapter/pflag-phoenix>]
- **Trans Lifeline** – A peer support hotline run by and for trans people, offering emotional and financial support. [Visit: <https://www.translifeline.org/>]
- **The Trevor Project** – Crisis intervention and suicide prevention services for LGBTQ+ youth. [Visit: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>]
- **Gender Spectrum** – Resources and support for gender-diverse individuals, including youth and families. [Visit: <https://www.genderspectrum.org/>]
- **Gay Arizona Resources** – A directory of LGBTQ+ resources in Phoenix, including healthcare providers, support groups, and legal services. [Visit: <https://gayarizona.com/phoenix/resources/>]

SUPPORT MATTERS

Having a solid support system can make a huge difference. If you're trans, finding community, whether online, in person, or both, can be life-changing.

For parents and allies: Supporting your trans loved ones through correct names, pronouns, and advocacy can mean everything. Resources like PFLAG Arizona offer guidance on how to be the best support system possible.

