

BRIEFINGS ON TRANS HEALTHCARE

FACT SHEET: PUBERTY BLOCKERS

2024



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What are puberty blockers?

Puberty blockers are medications used to “block” or “suppress” the chemicals that are responsible for the physical changes of puberty. This prevents the irreversible parts of the puberty process that are often distressing to trans young people (e.g., menstruation, breast and hip development, voice deepening, genital growth, and the development of masculine facial appearance and body shape).

By delaying these changes, trans young people, their families, and their clinicians can take the extra time needed to determine which next steps are right for each young person, without the pressure of puberty progressing. Because of this, puberty blockers are most effective when started early on in puberty.

Are puberty blockers safe?

Puberty blockers are acceptably safe and largely reversible. Puberty blocking medications have been used to safely treat “precocious puberty” for young people who start puberty younger than normal, long before they began to be used as a treatment option for trans and gender diverse young people.

Puberty blockers help to stabilise young people’s mental wellbeing and prevent additional distress that trans young people often face when they go through puberty and their body changes in ways that don’t align with their gender.

Puberty blockers do not appear to worsen real-life cognitive functioning or education outcomes; in fact, receiving gender-affirming healthcare can help young people to be more settled and focused at school and in their social lives by reducing their stress. Physically, puberty blockers appear to have minimal impact on long-term bone health.

As for any treatment, a family can weigh up the expected benefits of puberty blockers for their child against the known risks and unknowns, and compare this to the risks and benefits of not having puberty blockers, to make a well-informed decision.

What's the process for accessing puberty blockers in Australia?

To access puberty blockers in Australia, young people have to be referred by their GP or other doctor to a specialist clinic. There is often a long waitlist for these clinics; at the moment, a young person may wait up to 12 months for a first appointment.

This clinic will ask about the young person's and family's thoughts, concerns, and wishes, and consider any other factors that are necessary to ensure the young person is fully supported (e.g., other relevant physical, developmental or mental health concerns, as well as family and peer supports).

Treatment decisions are made collaboratively with the young person, their family, and the healthcare team; puberty blockers are only administered if they are wished for by the young person and deemed appropriate by the family and clinicians. While on this medication, the young person will continue to have regular appointments with medical and mental health clinicians to monitor the effects of this medication.

Where can I learn more?

You can read our scientific evidence brief on puberty blockers [here](#).

Intended use of information

While we make every effort to make sure the information in this resource is accurate and informative, the information does not take the place of professional medical advice.

Do not use our information as a substitute for the advice of a health professional.

If you are an individual seeking medical or health information for yourself or for someone else, you should obtain advice relevant to your particular circumstances from a health professional.

More information and support

For clinicians, please contact AusPATH for resources and support. www.auspath.org.au

For families and young people, please contact Transcend Australia for resources and support. www.transcend.org.au

This resource and associated evidence briefs and fact sheets can be downloaded from www.transcend.org.au/resources/evidence