

Tip Sheet: Understanding the risks of DIY Hormone Treatment

For many trans, gender diverse and non-binary people, access to gender-affirming healthcare can be difficult — especially with long wait times, cost barriers, or limited local services. When support feels out of reach, some young people consider managing their hormone treatment on their own, this is often referred to as “DIY hormones.”

While this might seem like a way to take control of the gender affirmation journey, DIY hormone use can be risky and may cause serious health problems.

This tip sheet is intended to provide evidence-based information, harm reduction tips and links to resources for families, young people or anyone considering accessing DIY hormone treatment.

Risks of DIY hormones

Purchasing hormones online, in unregulated markets, seeking advice in online forums such as in Discord or Reddit, or via personal connections is a way that individuals and families use to access the gender affirming care they desire and need.

However, many are not aware of the risks involved, which include:

- **Unknown ingredients or doses:** Medications bought online or from unregulated sources can contain unsafe substances, the wrong hormone levels, or no active ingredients at all.
- **Health complications:** Taking hormones without medical supervision can affect the liver, heart, blood pressure, and mood. They can affect other underlying or unknown existing conditions.
- **No medical support if things go wrong:** Without a doctor’s guidance, it can be hard to recognise or manage side effects early.
- **Interactions with other medications:** Some hormones or supplements can react with other medications or medical conditions.

- **Missing out on ways to protect your health:** When you self-medicate, you can’t access other supports such as fertility preservation, period suppression, regular health checks or mental health support to deal with side effects or track progress.

What to do instead

- **Trust your multidisciplinary team:** In addition to international clinical guidelines that synthesise lived experience, research in gender medicine and clinical expertise, Australian clinicians have developed standards of care for youth and adults to guide and regulate gender affirming care. Public and private health providers and multidisciplinary teams use these Standards of Care to ensure timely, relevant and age appropriate care that helps ensure that treatment is safe.
- **Reach out for professional advice:** If you can, talk to a GP, endocrinologist, or nurse who understands gender-affirming care. Some clinics offer telehealth options. We have listed some links in this tip sheet that list providers.
- **Connect with trusted organisations:** QNADA in Queensland can provide up-to-date information about services that can help reduce the risk of DIY hormones, such as testing.
- **Know you’re not alone:** There are community organisations that can help with peer navigation and support to help you access gender affirming care. A list of organisations has been provided in this tip sheet.

Hormones purchased on the internet might be what you think they are in terms of ingredients and brand, but might not be in the dosage that you think.

– **Rebecca Lang, CEO - QNADA**

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Links & Resources in Queensland

Queensland Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies (QNADA)

[Where to get help](#)

[Service Finder \(access to sterile injecting equipment through NSPs\)](#)

AusPATH

[Project 491 & Providers](#)

QuIVAA Peer Qnect, free and confidential service for those using substances

[Website](#)

Opening hours: Mon – Fri, 9am-4pm
Phone: 1800 175 889
Email: admin@quivaa.org.au

CheQpoint, a drug checking service, visit their website for updates on their services and operations

[Website](#)

Standards of Care

WPATH Standards of Care
[Version 8](#)

[Australian Standards of Care and Treatment Guidelines for Children and Adolescents](#)

[Informed Consent Standards of Care](#)

Advocacy

Dr Ken Pang
[Negative Media Coverage as a Barrier to Accessing Care for Transgender Children and Adolescents](#)

Gender Health Australia
[Banning gender-affirming care for trans youth is 'unconscionable'](#)

Community Organisations

YETI, Cairns
[Support for young people in far north Queensland](#)

Open Doors Youth Service
[Support online, in Brisbane & Logan](#)

Gayawur Rainbow
[Peer support, adults and youth](#)

Transcend Australia
[Support for families and carers](#)

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[Support for families and carers](#)

This tip sheet is derived from a webinar presented by Transcend Australia, titled "Understanding the Risks of DIY Hormone Treatment and Protecting Health." Our sincere appreciation goes to the webinar experts, Dr Eloise Brook, CEO - AusPATH, Rebecca Lang, CEO - QNADA, Olivia Donaghy, Psychologist - GHA, and Dr Stuart Aitken, Sexual Health Physician - GHA, for their invaluable participation in the webinar and their impactful work in this critical area.

Crisis numbers

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact the following services:

In case of emergency, please call **000**

LifeLine | **13 11 14**

QLife (LGBTIQ counselling line, 3pm to midnight everyday) | **1800 184 527**

Suicide call back service | **1300 659 467**

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Crisis Support | **13 YARN (13 92 76)**