

Testosterone

Testosterone is the hormone used in masculinising hormonal therapy. It comes in several formulations including injections, gels and creams. Currently in Australia to access a PBS-subsidised testosterone script, you need an initial script from an endocrinologist, sexual health physician or urologist. Rainbow Care Clinic is able to supply private scripts for testosterone and will refer you to a private endocrinologist or the public sexual health clinic to access a PBS-subsidised script. Once you have been prescribed the initial PBS-subsidised script, Rainbow Care Clinic can continue to provide these without ongoing appointments with the endocrinologist or sexual health clinic, unless you change the type of testosterone you are taking.

Testosterone can be commenced at full dose or can be slowly increased for a more gradual effect. It is important to understand that bottom (clitoral) growth and breaking of the voice may occur even at low levels of testosterone and thus later changes such as development of facial hair and masculine body shape are difficult to achieve without bottom growth or voice breaking. It is very difficult to tailor masculinising hormonal therapy to pick for some features and not others. It is possible to cease hormonal therapy after some permanent changes have occurred. Testosterone use is generally safe if used under medical supervision. You will require regular blood tests and monitoring while you are taking testosterone. Testosterone targets are 10-15 nmol/L measured at the lowest point (trough level), that is, just before your next dose of testosterone.

Types of Testosterone

Testosterone can be delivered to your body in either injection form or absorbed through the skin (transdermal) via patches, gels or creams applied to the skin (see table below). Injections may be preferred by those wishing to have full masculinisation effects of testosterone, avoid a daily medication and/ or reduce risk of transfer of testosterone to partners via skin contact. Transdermal options may be preferred by those wishing to start on a lower dose of testosterone (noting that full masculinisation can be achieved with non-injection formulations) and/or do not wish to have injections or attend the clinic for the injections.

Applying Gels and Creams

Each different testosterone product has different instructions for application which should be followed. Gels and creams should be applied thinly to clean, dry and healthy skin. Creams need to be rubbed in while gels should be allowed to dry on the skin without rubbing them in. Testavan recommends using their applicator rather than your hands and fingers, while the other products do not have an applicator and you should wash your hands thoroughly after application. Product information advises different sites for applications for different products; Testavan = shoulder or upper arms; Androforte = torso; Testogel = shoulder, upper arm or abdomen. You can apply these products to areas not mentioned such as the upper thighs or torso, as these may be preferred to prevent transfer to other people, but be aware the product absorption may not have been tested in these sites so absorption may be variable. Once your skin is dry or the cream rubbed in, wash your hands thoroughly and cover the treated area with clothing. Avoid bathing, showering or swimming after use (2 hours for Testavan 2% gel, 6 hours for Androforte cream and Testogel 1% gel) as this may make it less effective. Thus try to use it just after a wash.

Testosterone gels and creams can transfer to other people via touch or skin to skin contact so it is important that others (especially women and children) do not touch the area where you have applied the testosterone. The risk of transfer can be reduced by washing your hands thoroughly after applying the gel or cream and having a shower before situations where skin-to-skin contact is likely. Be sure to keep testosterone packets away from any children and dispose of them safely. If this is a significant concern for you, you may wish to consider injections or patches.

Testosterone injections

There are two main types of testosterone injections, short acting and long acting. The shorter acting testosterone requires injections to be given every 2-4 weeks. The advantage of these injections is that you can learn how to self administer them which may suit people who have to travel a lot or have difficulties accessing a clinic for their injections. Unfortunately, they have been shortages, it is not listed on the PBS and there can be more fluctuations in the levels of testosterone. The more commonly used testosterone injection is Reandron which is give as an intramuscular injection in the buttocks every 10-12 weeks. The advantage is less frequent injections however because self-administration is quite difficult due to the higher volume of the injection and the need to injected into the buttocks you will need to attend a medical clinic for your injections.

Types of testosterone available in Australia

Testosterone	Full dose	Pros	Cons
<i>Injections</i>			
Testosterone undecanoate (Reandron)	1 x 1g injection every 10-12 weeks (first 2 doses 6 weeks apart)	Less frequent dosing	Needs to be administer by nurse or doctor
Testosterone enanthate (Primoteston)	1 x 250mg injection 2-4 weekly	Can be self-administered	Private scripts only
Testosterone esters (Sustanon)	1 x 250mg injection 2-4 weekly	Can be self-administered	Private scripts only
<i>Transdermal (across the skin)</i>			
Testosterone gel patch (Androderm)	1 x 5mg patch every 24 hours	Low risk of transfer	Can cause skin irritation
Testosterone 1% gel (Testogel)	4 x 12.5mg pumps once daily	Easiest for low dosing	Risk of transfer to others
Testosterone 2% gel (Testavan)	1 x 23mg pump daily		Risk of transfer to others
Testosterone 5% cream (Androforte)	2ml (100mg) once daily		Risk of transfer to others

Costs of testosterone

Testosterone	Private cost / unit*	Private cost 30 days (standard full dose)*	Standard full dose
Injections			
Testosterone undecanoate (Reandron)	\$114.69	\$38.30	1 injection every 3 months
Testosterone enanthate (Primoteston)	\$37.38 (3 injections)	\$24.92	1 injection every 2 weeks
Testosterone esters (Sustanon)	\$29.99 (1 injection)	\$58.98	1 injection every 2 weeks
Transdermal (across the skin)			
Testosterone gel patch (Androderm)	\$73.39 (30 patches)	\$73.39	Daily patches
Testosterone 1% gel (Testogel)	\$73.39 (2x60 dose pump packs)	\$73.39 \$34.70 \$18.35	4 pump per day** 2 pumps per day 1 pumps per day
Testosterone 2% gel (Testavan)	\$79.69 (1 x 56 dose pump pack)	\$38.84	1 pump daily
Testosterone 5% cream (Androforte)	\$105.39 (1x 50mL tube)	\$126.47	2ml daily

* Prices are approximate and based on a 2022 Chemist Warehouse online search; prices are subject to change and individual pharmacy pricing

** More cost effective if low dose, listed in grey