

Skin care in transgender youth

PART 2: Feminizing Gender Affirmation — Transgender Female/Male-to-Female/Transfeminine

Many gender affirming practices and medications can have effects on the skin and hair. In addition to other experts involved in gender-affirming care, dermatologists can help to manage these changes.

ESTROGEN AND CHANGES TO THE SKIN AND HAIR

Some people may choose to start estrogen, a type of hormone. Estrogen can decrease body and facial hair growth, decrease muscle bulk, and lead to some breast tissue growth.

SKIN DRYNESS

Estrogen decreases oil production in the skin and may lead to dryness. Gentle skin care is important. Take short, lukewarm (not hot) showers followed by application of a thick moisturizing cream (Vanicream, Cetaphil, CeraVe) or ointment (Vaseline, Aquaphor). If the skin becomes inflamed (red and itchy), you may need a topical steroid that a dermatologist can prescribe. The SPD has more information on gentle skin care within the atopic dermatitis handout: <https://pedsderm.net/for-patients-families/patient-handouts/#AtopicDerm>

HAIR REMOVAL

Although estrogen will lead to slower facial and body hair growth, many individuals will have persistent hair that they want removed. There are many options for hair removal. These can be temporary or more permanent.

TEMPORARY HAIR REMOVAL

Temporary measures to decrease hair visibility include shaving, waxing, plucking, threading, and depending on your skin tone, bleaching the hair. Irritation from these methods is common. "Razor bumps" is the name for ingrown hairs that occur after shaving. They can be painful and may cause a darkening of the skin after they heal that will fade with time. If razor bumps occur, your doctors can discuss options to treat and prevent them.

Other temporary measures include depilatory creams, which dissolve hair and are available over-the-counter, and eflornithine cream, which helps to slow the rate of hair growth to decrease how often shaving is needed. These creams can cause irritation, changes in skin color, or chemical burns in severe cases. If these side effects occur, stop using the product and discuss with a medical provider. Your dermatologist may have special instructions to manage and minimize side effects.

PERMANENT HAIR REMOVAL (LASERS AND ELECTROLYSIS)

Laser hair removal is a technique to decrease hair in desired areas by destroying the hair follicles with a specialized laser. This will take multiple sessions every 2-6 weeks depending on the type of laser and the location. The side effects of laser therapies include pain, changes in skin color at treatment sites, skin breakdown, blistering, and scarring.

Electrolysis is the process in which a technician inserts a needle into the hair follicle and administers an electrical current that damages and destroys the follicle to prevent hair growth. This method is time-intensive, and some feel it is more painful than lasers. Side effects include hyperpigmentation and infection.

OVERVIEW

What can dermatologists help with for gender-affirming care?

- Estrogen-related dry skin
- Hair removal techniques
- Side effects of hair removal
- Surgical or procedural scarring

Dermatologists can help with many skin and hair related parts of gender-affirming care!

Neither laser hair removal or electrolysis can guarantee complete and permanent hair removal. Some hair will remain after these procedures that requires continued shaving or other hair removal techniques. However, both laser hair removal and electrolysis will permanently remove some hairs and make the hair in the area overall less dense. Choosing what option is best for you will depend on many factors including skin tone and hair color, local availability, and insurance coverage, among other factors. Discussing these options with experienced hair removal experts is important.

▀ GENDER AFFIRMING PROCEDURES

Sometimes people have surgery to align their outside appearance with their gender. These surgeries are permanent. In some centers, there may be age restrictions to when this type of surgery can occur. They are usually performed by a team of surgical specialists, including plastic and reconstructive surgeons, urologists, and others. Relying on your medical and surgical team is important to discuss the risks and benefits of surgery, as well as the best timing for you. There may be ways to improve post-surgical skin changes, including scars, if they are bothersome or severe. You can discuss these options with your healthcare team or dermatologist. Additionally, the SPD has a handout that explains how to prevent and care for scars: <https://pedsderm.net/for-patients-families/patient-handouts/#Scars>



The Society for Pediatric Dermatology
8365 Keystone Crossing, Suite 107
Indianapolis, IN 46240
(317) 202-0224
www.pedsderm.net

The Society for Pediatric Dermatology and Wiley Publishing cannot be held responsible for any errors or for any consequences arising from the use of the information contained in this handout. Handout originally published in *Pediatric Dermatology*; Vol. 39, No. 5 (2022).

© 2022 The Society for Pediatric Dermatology

Contributing SPD Members:
Mitchell Braun, MD
Ilona J Frieden, MD
Joanna Tu, MD

Committee Reviewers:
Leslie Castelo-Soccio, MD
Irene Lara-Corrales, MD

EDI Content Reviewer:
Marissa Joseph, MD

Expert Reviewer:
Andrea Zaenglein, MD