

# Puberty Blockers

## Are They Right For Me and My Child?

*CHA is committed to providing the transgender community access to high quality health care and services. We offer hormone therapy for adults and adolescents who are 16 or older and access to services to those under 16. Our CHA providers will work with you to support the decision that is best for you.*

**What Are Puberty Blockers?** Puberty blockers are medicines that block the hormones that make your body go through puberty. There are a lot of reasons why people start taking puberty blockers. We're here to help you find out if it's the right decision for you.

**How Does Puberty Begin?** Puberty is the process the body goes through to become capable of making a baby (reproduction), as well as to reach adult size and brain development. Puberty starts when your brain tells your pituitary gland to start releasing puberty-related hormones. This happens at different ages for different people. During this time, your body starts to increase the amount of certain puberty-related hormones, Follicle-Stimulating Hormone (FSH) and (Luteinizing Hormone (LH). This causes your ovaries to start producing estrogen or your testicles to start producing testosterone. These hormones do not cause acne, pubic or armpit hair – those are caused by other hormones.

### **Body changes in people with ovaries (without puberty blockers):**

- Breast changes
- Changes in body shape (the “pear shape”)
- Menstrual periods start
- Pubic and armpit hair, increased leg hair
- Physical growth
- Increased acne

### **Body changes in people with testicles (without puberty blockers)**

- Testicle growth (improves the body's ability to make testosterone)
- Penis growth
- Pubic hair, increased armpit and facial hair
- Increased acne
- Rapid growth (growth spurt)
- Voice changes (lowers and deepens)

## How Do Puberty Blockers Work?

Puberty blockers (called GnRH analogues) cause your body to stop releasing puberty hormones (LH and FSH). It's like hitting a 'pause button' on puberty.

**Will puberty blockers stop all changes in my body?** No, puberty blockers will not stop pubic or armpit hair from growing or improve acne. Puberty blockers only make a difference for the puberty changes that make you look "female" or "male". For example, in bodies with ovaries, breast size may get smaller if they have already started to develop. In bodies with testicles, testicle size may decrease, and penis growth will be halted.

**What happens if I start puberty blockers late?** If started late, blockers are not able to completely reverse changes that have already happened. Blockers can stop any further puberty changes and may reduce the size of body parts already impacted by puberty.

**Are puberty blockers permanent?** No, blockers are not permanent. If you decide to stop puberty blockers without starting cross sex hormones, your body will start going through the puberty of your sex assigned at birth. You can stop the puberty blockers at any time. CHA clinical staff can help you learn how to stop your blockers safely.

**How long does it take for blockers to start working?** It can take anywhere from one to two months for blockers to start working. Everyone is different and it is hard to determine how quickly your body will respond. In the beginning, your body may show more signs of puberty, but this will decrease as you continue to take blockers.

## What Are The Different Kinds of Puberty Blocking Medicines?

**Depo Lupron (Leuprolide):** This type of blocker is given by your provider as a shot once every 3 months, usually in your arm or leg. Topical numbing cream can reduce the pain. The injection area may be sore for about one day.

**Histrelone:** This is placed under the skin as an implant in the upper arm. Histrelone usually works for little over a year and sometimes up to two years. After it stops working, it needs to be removed and replaced at a clinic appointment. We will discuss pain management options before the procedure. After the implant is placed, your arm may be sore for about 2 days.

**Are these medicines safe?** We recommend puberty blockers based on our medical experience, judgment and your specific health needs. The Endocrine Society and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health support puberty blockers. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves puberty blockers for children who start puberty at a very young age, but has not approved puberty blockers for transgender children. It is not safe to start puberty blockers before puberty.

**What are the risks of starting puberty blockers?** The long-term safety of puberty blocking medicines is not completely understood. There may be long-term risks we do not know. There are risks associated with bone health and fertility:

- **Bone Health:** Blocking puberty can make your bones weaker (lower bone density). This may get better when you stop the puberty blockers or start cross-hormone therapy. While on puberty blockers, we recommend taking calcium, vitamin D and doing bone strength-building exercises like walking, jumping and weightlifting. We may want to perform certain tests to check the health of your bones.
- **Fertility:** Taking puberty blockers should not affect your fertility (your ability to have a baby in the future.) However, permanent damage to fertility is a concern for people who stay on puberty blockers and then take cross-sex hormones. Your provider will review the risk of infertility with you prior to starting any cross-sex hormones.

## Are Blockers Right for You?

CHA will work hard to answer all your questions about the benefits and risks of puberty blockers. We want you to have a good understanding of what to expect before you decide to start. Starting puberty blockers can give you time before making more permanent decisions, like starting cross-sex hormones. Puberty blockers prevent some of the “female” or “male” specific changes to the body that can be distressing for transgender people.

**When should I start taking puberty blockers?** Puberty blockers can be taken after your body begins showing signs of puberty. Bodies with ovaries will begin to grow breasts (breast buds). Testicles and penises will increase in size in bodies with those parts.

**How will my provider know puberty has started?** Before starting blockers, we may recommend testing to confirm that puberty has started or to determine how far along you are. CHA providers will do their best to help you feel comfortable throughout this physical exam recognizing it can be difficult for some people.

**How long can I stay on blockers?** Puberty blockers are used until you decide you want to either resume your regular puberty process, or until you are ready to start cross-sex hormone therapy. It's best to stop using blockers after four years to protect your bones.

## Transgender Care at CHA

CHA earned the coveted “LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality Leader” designation for 2022 in the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s 15th anniversary edition of the Healthcare Equality Index. Visit our [LGBTQ+ Living Well](#) and [Transgender Care](#) pages to find out more about our commitment to caring for the transgender and gender diverse communities.

*Used with permission of Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, all rights reserved.*

*“Pubertal Blockers for Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth.” Mayo Clinic, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 1 Nov. 2022, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/gender-dysphoria/in-depth/pubertal-blockers/art-20459075>.*