

# Transgender/Non-Binary Voice Therapy

*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 decisions that are best for you.*

Transgender/non-binary voice therapy is a specialized therapy that can help achieve voice modification to mirror your gender identity. Modifying voice pitch (raising or lowering pitch) can be achieved through voice therapy. Additionally, you may also want to learn communication skills and ways of speaking to mirror your gender identity, which can be targeted within speech therapy sessions.

## The Sound of Your Voice — Anatomy

The resonant frequency (or perceived pitch) of a person is related to the size of a person's vocal cords, hormones (testosterone) that result in thickening of vocal cords at puberty, and other anatomical structures that play a role in generating voice. Smaller vocal cords lead to higher pitched voices and larger vocal cords lead to lower pitched voices.

Surgery may be an option for transgender males to lower voice pitch in some patients' cases, in addition to hormone therapy. While taking testosterone will make changes to lower a person's pitch, estrogen or hormone therapy may not directly impact voice and pitch. Voice therapy can play a role in achieving this desired pitch.

Harmful misgendering of transgender and non-binary people based on the pitch of their voices occurs regularly. Our voices play such a large role in our identity, and it is important to have tools available to find our voice that matches our identity!

## Feminizing:

The average pitch for what is considered a female voice is 220 Hz with anything above 160 Hz usually assigned female. Additional vocal qualities can be learned from voice therapy, or voice modification. Increasing your pitch variability by using more range and resonance by speaking at a tighter register are two examples.

## Masculinizing:

The average pitch for what is considered a male voice is 120 Hz with anything below 175 Hz usually assigned male.

Taking testosterone will lower your voice, but maybe not enough and may cause secondary effects. Sometimes a person's voice box does not get proportionately bigger to the vocal cords, leading to vocal problems. Voice therapy can help address this issue and other concerns like voice fatigue, hoarseness, voice cracking, projection, and sounding young.

Some people prefer not to take testosterone and will rely on voice therapy to make voice changes. Additional vocal qualities can also be learned with voice therapy. Some examples include reducing pitch variability by using a narrower pitch range, and increasing voice intensity by speaking louder.

## **Non-Binary:**

The range for a gender non-binary pitch is between 155 and 187 Hz. Voice therapy can help you train your voice to maintain a more neutral pitch to better match your gender identity.

### **How long do the changes last?**

Feminizing and non-binary voice exercises need to be ongoing in order to maintain changes. However, with practice, vocal pitch and vocal qualities get easier to maintain. Masculinizing changes from testosterone are permanent.

### **Will voice therapy get my voice where I want it to be?**

The size of your vocal cord anatomy will impact how much you can change your pitch. Practicing other vocal qualities relating to your communication style can impact how you convey your gender. Speak with your provider about surgery if you are unsatisfied with your voice therapy results.

### **Are there risks to voice therapy?**

It should not hurt to speak. Vocal cord strain can occur during voice therapy. Contact your provider if you experience hoarseness, vocal fatigue, or pain when speaking. You may need to rest your voice or modify your therapy.

### **Find the right voice therapist**

There are many great voice therapists, but it's important to find someone who understands your needs and will help you achieve your goals. Speak with your primary care provider for a referral.

## **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.

GR23\_203