

# Spectrum: The Other Clinic

## Hormone Therapy Telemedicine: How It Works

The following description is an example of the usual procedures for a new patient who has never been on hormone therapy before. Much of it still applies to those who are currently on hormones, though. The main difference is that those who are brand new to hormone therapy are usually monitored a bit more frequently in the beginning than those who are already on therapy with stable hormone levels. So take this explanation with a grain of salt because everyone is different, and some people may need more or less frequent visits and/or labs.

1. Schedule your Initial Hormone Visit.
2. Fill out the medical paperwork online via the link emailed to you.
3. Read and watch the required educational papers and videos.
4. Attend your appointment, which is done through a live video chat session.
5. Lab orders will be faxed to a location near you.
6. Go to have your labs drawn to obtain baseline kidney and liver function, as well as baseline hormone levels. When the results come back, you will be contacted about them.
7. Prescriptions are sent to your local pharmacy. And you may then start the prescription hormone regimen that was discussed during your first visit.
8. Follow up in 4-6 weeks for a quick visit for re-evaluation and discussion of any side effects experienced. Doses may be adjusted here, or other medications added at this time.
9. Follow up after this in 2-3 months for another re-evaluation and to repeat labs. Doses will be adjusted based on the hormone levels that result.
10. Follow up every 3 months for repeat labs and re-evaluation of effects for at least the first year. After the first year, if your levels stay steady, then visits may be spaced out to every 6 months at that point.

All of these steps, of course, depend upon the individual needs and risk factors of each patient. Again, everyone is different, and there is no cookie-cutter way of doing hormonal transition. I want you to be as educated as possible about the process, which is why I made the initial videos and readings for you to watch/read. I will also continue to bring up topics and issues to be aware of during your follow up appointments so as to continue the educational process.

Below are descriptions/explanations of common procedures regarding labs and prescriptions.

### **Labs: Where to go?**

You may have them drawn wherever you want. I can fax your orders just about anywhere. If you don't know of a lab facility, I can help you find one. However, some factors may influence your choices, such as whether you have insurance that might pay for the labs, or if you are cash pay only.

If you have insurance, be absolutely sure that your insurance company covers labs for transitional gender care. See the other paper I have typed up entitled "Does my health insurance cover hormone therapy?" for some tips on how to go about checking on this. Believe me, you don't want to assume that these labs are covered, and then instead get a surprise bill in the mail because they actually weren't. Hormone labs are somewhat "special" and can cost a fairly pretty penny on their own. I have seen anywhere from \$450 - \$2000 charged when insurance did not cover them. So check with your insurance company first!

If you do not have insurance covering the labs and are cash pay, you have a couple of options.

- 1) You can call different lab facilities and ask them how much it would cost to have this panel drawn: **CBC, CMP, Total Testosterone, Total Estrogen, Estradiol, and SHBG**. Then

compare the prices given for the best one. You would be surprised at how much prices can differ between different lab companies. Much like how a shirt can cost less money at one store than another. These are the most common labs I order together that I just listed. Sometimes I may add a couple other tests, and sometimes I may order less than this. But if you want a ballpark average figure, then ask the lab facility how much it will be for the list I just typed in bold above.

- 2) Another option....There is an online company that I have personally contacted and verified that offers a much cheaper option that is \$149 and includes everything I need to monitor your therapy. The way they work is: you go on their website and search for the trans-hormone wellness panel. Select the panel and then purchase it. They will email you your lab orders. You can then go to any Labcorp or Quest Diagnostics facility to have your labs drawn by bringing the printed order sheet with you. They have a search function on their website that you can use to find the closest facility to your location. Once you have your labs drawn, they will email you your results in about 3 business days, and you will need to forward them to me so I can load them into your chart. I must say, they are the absolute cheapest price I have found yet when it comes to paying cash for hormone labs. But please let me know if you find a better option so I can share!

### **Pharmacy: Which to choose?**

You can use any pharmacy that you want to for your prescriptions, and I will send them there. If you do not have insurance that will help pay for the medications, it is a good idea to call around to at least three different pharmacies to check on their prices. Or you can use a prescription coupon app like [www.goodrx.com](http://www.goodrx.com) to search for your medicine, and it will tell you the prices of several pharmacies when using their GoodRx coupon code.

### **Price Estimates on Medications**

In general, I have found these prices below to be the averages reported to me by my patients. The variability in price depends on many things, such as the dose, physical location where you buy it (city, county, etc), which pharmacy, and the quantity of medicine ordered.

These estimates are only provided as a general guide and are in no way to be taken as 100% accurate as prices change every few months, and these are just self-reported price ranges that my patients and friends have told me. If you are unclear, always be sure to call your pharmacy first so they can tell you the exact price you will pay.

Oral Estradiol- \$15-\$30 or less for one month supply.

Injectable Estradiol- \$80-\$150 for 3-5 month supply.

Transdermal Estradiol- \$30-\$90 for one month supply.

Oral Progesterone- \$20-\$45 for one month supply

Rectal Progesterone- \$50-\$200 for one month supply

Testosterone- \$80-\$200 for a 2-4 month supply.

Spirolactone- \$5-\$15 for a one month supply.

Casodex- \$25-\$120 for one month supply.