

What changes can I expect?

You may start to notice changes within a few weeks to months of starting oestrogen therapy. Most changes happen over 6 to 18 months, with breast development continuing for up to 2 years.

Here is a helpful timetable of anticipated changes:

Effects of Oestrogen therapy:

Effect	Expected onset	Expected maximum effect
Skin and hair		
Softening of skin	3 to 6 months	Unknown
Thinning and slowed growth of body and facial hair	6 to 12 months	3 years +
Body Shape		
Body fat redistribution	3 to 6 months	2 to 5 years
Breast development	3 to 6 months	2 to 3 years
Decreased muscle mass / strength	3 to 6 months	1 to 2 years
Sexual Health		
Decreased spontaneous erections	1 to 3 months	3 to 6 months
Decreased libido	1 to 3 months	1 to 2 years
Decreases testicular volume	3 to 6 months	2 to 3 years

While many of these changes are reversible if the oestrogen is stopped, changes such as breast development and decreased testicular volume are generally irreversible.

Adapted from WPATH and Endocrine Society guidelines

Different ways to take oestrogen

In the UK, there are three main ways to take oestrogen. Your gender-affirming care prescriber will help you choose the best option based on your preferences and health conditions.

Form	How to use	Pros	Cons	Cost
 Tablets (oral Oestradiol)	Taken by mouth Typical dose is anywhere from 2mg to 6mg daily	Commonly used; easy to take; hormone levels can be measured with blood tests	May have a slightly higher risk of blood clots compared to patches	About £8 per month
 Patches (transdermal Oestradiol)	Patch that sticks to the skin and is changed twice a week Depending on your dose, you may need more than one patch at a time	May have lower risk of blood clots; good option if you smoke or are over 45; provides steady hormone levels	Can cause skin irritation; may be visible; may fall off with sweating or swimming	About £8-20 per month
 Gel (transdermal Oestradiol)	Gel that is applied (usually to arms or thighs) every day	May have lower risk of blood clots; steady hormone levels; less visible than patches	Must allow gel to dry before dressing; avoid skin-to-skin contact with others for several hours after application	About £15 per month

*pricing varies by pharmacy provider **