

A TRANS-MASCULINE GUIDE TO WELLNESS

Trans-masculine bodies come in a wonderfully wide range of sizes, shapes, colors, configurations, abilities, and body parts. **They all deserve to be cared for.**

WHAT'S UP, DOC?

Find and regularly visit a health care provider you feel good about; someone you're willing to tell the truth to. You may know more about trans health than they do; that's ok if they're willing to meet you where you are. To see FORGE's list of Wisconsin/Illinois trans-friendly medical providers, go to www.forge-forward.org

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS.

Get regular blood tests and preventive screenings. If you use testosterone, common routine blood tests include: complete blood count, total testosterone (= 300-1100 ng/dL), lipid profile (total cholesterol = <200mg/dL), liver function panel (ALT = 21-72 UL), and blood glucose (<100mg/dL). Your medical history, length of time on T, and current medical conditions will determine the frequency of these tests.

COUNT THOSE RED BLOOD CELLS.

Polycythemia (an overabundance of red blood cells) frequently occurs in trans-masculine people using testosterone. If or when your hematocrit (40-54%), hemoglobin (12-16 gm/dL), or red blood cell (4.2-6.8 M/uL) counts get high, discuss options with your provider. Lowering your testosterone dose, increasing the frequency of testosterone doses, using topical forms of testosterone, stopping smoking, donating blood, and taking a daily aspirin might be recommended.

DON'T LET THE PRESSURE BUILD.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in U.S. adults. Don't become a statistic. Keep your blood pressure and cholesterol counts down through routine checks, regular exercise, stress reduction techniques, and a diverse, low-fat, high-nutrition diet.

MOVE IT!

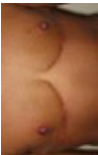
Exercise is not only good for your body, but it improves mental health and alertness, reduces stress, and helps you sleep better.

FUEL UP.

Well-balanced diets include ample fruits, vegetables, whole grains and protein. Keep portion sizes small and enjoy a wide variety of foods.

KICK THE HABIT.

Testosterone and smoking aren't a healthy pair. Together, they increase your risk of heart disease more than either one alone.



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ENOUGH ALREADY!

Addictions come in a variety of forms: alcohol, drugs (prescription or street), nicotine, gambling, sex, food, or just about anything else. Don't let them take over your life, and remember that some of them - drinking alcohol, for example - can stress your liver.

WATCH THOSE EGG CARTONS.

Did you know that even *without* using testosterone, butches and trans-masculine folks have higher rates of Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) than cisgender women? The risk of PCOS goes up with testosterone use, and having PCOS raises the risk of diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and endometrial cancer. What to do? Sorry, dude: The prevention methods are regular pelvic exams and early diagnosis, or surgical removal of the ovaries.

LOVE YOUR LIVER.

Testosterone can put a strain on your liver. Help it out by lowering your alcohol use, keeping your testosterone dosage moderate (more is not better!), and knowing what drugs (such as cholesterol-lowering drugs and even Tylenol) are processed by the liver. Routine blood tests can help you and your health care provider keep a tab on things. Your practitioner will have advice if your liver needs attention.

STRONG AS AN OX.

Believe it or not, hormones keep our bones strong. If you've had your ovaries removed and you aren't taking hormones (of any kind), ask your health care provider what you should do to keep your bones from getting brittle.

BUILD A STRONG TEAM.

No one makes it through life alone. Friends, family, professionals, and spiritual connections all can help us deal with day-to-day stress and transphobia. Groups like FORGE's social support meetings and events like our Writing to Heal series can help keep things in perspective, too.

KEEP IT LOVING.

Learn about healthy relationships. If you suspect yours isn't healthy or is even abusive, seek help in changing the pattern or getting out.

SHARE THE LOVE, BUT NOT THE FLUIDS!

HIV and sexually transmitted infections don't discriminate. Be prepared when you're going to be sexual with others. Have and use barriers (dental dams, condoms, gloves) to keep body fluids safely confined to their original owners.