

This is my skin:

Understanding skin changes that can occur during transition

Exploring your gender and transitioning can cause some changes in how your skin looks and feels. This leaflet talks about some of the common skin changes, conditions and symptoms you might experience if you are undergoing gender affirming medical transition, and what you can do about them.

The information provided is limited by the available studies, including those in different populations and ethnic groups.

This is a leaflet from Karo Healthcare and is intended for members of the public.

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What skin problems might I experience?





Exploring gender, expression and transition causes all kinds of changes, including the way your skin looks and feels – and some of these changes can be unwanted or uncomfortable.



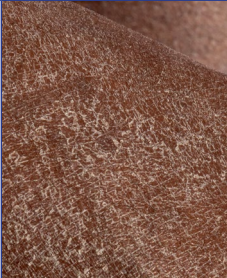

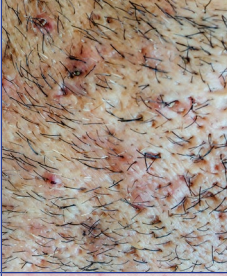

New or changing skin is common for many transgender, non-binary and gender diverse people, especially if you are undergoing treatment related to gender affirming medical transition.¹

We know that having skin issues during transition can affect how you feel.² We therefore think it is important to know what you can do to look after your skin, to look out for key developments that need management, and when to seek help or advice.

Common in people taking masculinising hormone therapy

Condition	How can this look?	What is it and how do you get it?	Treatment recommendations
Acne		Acne is common in trans+ people taking testosterone therapy, affecting your lower face, chest, upper arms, and back. ²	Try over-the-counter acne treatments. If you receive further treatment for more severe acne, make sure to check if it might interfere with masculinisation or wound healing, if you had gender affirming surgery recently. ²
Itch, acne, rash or infection		This can happen on the chest due to binding ³ or in the genital area due to packing.	Make sure your binder fits you well and you clean and follow safe binding practices. Use topical over-the-counter creams for acne or mild infection in the first instance.
Androgenic alopecia (hair loss)		This is a specific pattern of hair loss on the top of the scalp that can be triggered by testosterone therapy. ⁴ It can be reaffirming to some but unwanted in others. ⁵	Over-the-counter hair thinning treatments (Minoxidil 5%) can help. ⁵ Prescription options are also available from a healthcare professional, if required.
Scarring and keloid formation		Due to chest surgery; appear as firm, elevated and flesh-coloured papules (bumps). More visible among those with darker skin. ⁶	Try over-the-counter steroid creams, or speak to your doctor or surgeon for further treatment options.

Common in people taking feminising hormone therapy

Condition	How can this look?	What is it and how do you get it?	Treatment recommendations
Dry skin (xerosis)		Dry skin and weak nails can affect trans+ people taking feminising hormone treatment. ⁷	Over-the-counter moisturisers (creams and lotions) can help tackle dry skin. ⁷
Eczema (atopic dermatitis)		Feminising hormone therapy can cause atopic dermatitis to develop – dry, itchy rash-like patches of skin. ^{1,8}	Over-the-counter moisturisers or topical steroids (in more severe cases) can help. ⁷
Thick hair growth (persistent hirsutism) and razor bumps		Facial hair growth may require frequent shaving which can lead to 'razor bumps'. ⁶ This is when hair grows back into the skin, causing painful, red, itchy bumps and even changes in skin colour and scarring. It is more common among those with darker skin. ^{6,9}	Proper shaving techniques and hair removal creams can help to protect your skin. For more severe cases, you can also get some prescription creams. ⁶
Genital itch, rash, and infection		Tucking can cause these symptoms, as well as pain. ¹⁰	Try over-the-counter topical emollients to repair skin barrier, and antihistamines to suppress itch can help.



There are a variety of options out there – it's important to find the one that works best for you.

Going through skin changes during transition can be both euphoric and challenging.

Being in the know about what to expect and where to seek support can help take care of any developments quickly, to help you feel more comfortable in your skin.

E45 has supported research into skin changes encountered during gender affirming medical transition, from which some of the findings in this material have been sourced. The research screened over 500 research studies and followed a robust methodology.¹¹

To find out more, visit the E45 website.



References: **1.** Imhof RL, et al. J Am Acad Dermatol 2020;83(5):1516–1518. **2.** Radi R, et al. Am J Clin Dermatol 2022;23(2):219–229. **3.** Peitzmeier SM, et al. Pediatrics 2021;147(3):e20200728. **4.** Tang GT, et al. Clin Exp Dermatol 2023; 48(10):1117–1127. **5.** Gu Y, et al. Australas J Dermatol. 2024;65(1):24–36. **6.** Yeung H, et al. Endocrinol Metab Clin North Am 2019;48(2):429–440. **7.** Dhingra N, et al. J Am Acad Dermatol 2019;80(6):1712–1721. **8.** DermNet™. Atopic dermatitis. Available at: <https://dermnetnz.org/topics/atopic-dermatitis>. **9.** Ogunbiyi A. Clin Cosmet Invest Dermatol 2019;12:241–247. **10.** Poteat T, et al. J Clin Transl Sci 2018;2(Suppl. 1):76. **11.** Arcelus J, Kamaruddin K & Bouman W. P. Dermatological Aspects of Gender Affirming Medical Treatment in Transgender and Gender Diverse People: A Systematic Review, International Journal of Transgender Health (Submitted).