

Transgender Health & Herbs



By Larkin Schmiedl

Some trans health basics

- Not everyone has surgery or takes hormones!
- U.S. - trans people = about 0.3-0.5% of population
- Term 'transgender' not culturally universal!
- Hugely under-researched area of health
- WPATH & the Standards of Care are the systems used by medical professionals working with trans health

Gender-affirming surgeries

- Breast augmentation
- Orchiectomy
- Vaginoplasty
- Facial/vocal feminization
- Chest surgery / or breast reduction
- Hysterectomy
- Metoidioplasty
- Phalloplasty
- Body contouring/masculinization

Possible complications after surgery

- bad reactions to anaesthetic
- blood loss
- blood clots
- artery blockages
- wound infection
- abscesses
- lost sensation
- hematomas or seromas
- plus some surgery-specific complications



What can we do herbally?

- *prevent infection
- *help tissue heal
- *vaginoplasty - sitz & douche
- *post-surgical constipation
- *support with scars
- *help nerve damage & pain

More awesome things for surgery

- probiotics bc antibiotics will usually be taken
- vitamin C to bowel tolerance (i.e. take 500mg every hour if you're able) for immunity & to strengthen/grow back connective tissue
- homeopathic arnica
- nutrient-rich, easily-assimilated foods
- liver & lymph herbs

HORMONES



Natural transition

- The draw of having a post-apocalyptic hormone source / hormonal self-sufficiency
- It's experimental
- What we can do with herbs is largely energetic
- What it comes down to: herbs cannot match the strength of pharma hormones or cause the same huge changes
- Awesome for people who want a more energetic, less drastically physical shift

Hormones people take

- Estrogen (Estradiol)
- Androgen blockers (Spironolactone, Finasteride, Dutasteride)
- Progesterone
- Testosterone
- Adolescent puberty blocker: Lupron Depot

Potential risks

- Transfem estrogen dose ~3-5x higher than cis women on HRT
- Transmasc testosterone dose similar to hypogonadal cis men
- Unknown cancer risk with hormones – breast, cervical, uterine, ovarian, prostate
- Gallstones – *estrogen & progesterone*
- Risk of DVT/blood clots - *estrogen*
- Overproduction of RBCs – *testosterone*
- More *estrogen* + more cortisol – lower insulin sensitivity
- Cardiovascular disease – testosterone, and progesterone + estrogen (estrogen alone reduces risk)
- Raised potassium levels, low blood pressure - *Spiro*
- Potential changes to immune system?
- Hormone use causing other cascading changes in our endocrine system?

Cytochrome P450

- aka pathways where things are metabolized in the liver (affects med & herb interactions)
- Estradiol is metabolized by 3A4, 3A5, 3A7 and 1A2
- Progesterone by 3A4, 3A5, 3A7 and 2C19
- Testosterone by 3A4, 3A5, 3A7

HERB LOVE for us



Beneficial interactions

- Black cohosh with estrogen & progesterone
- Calcium-magnesium and vitamin D with estrogen
- Zinc and testosterone
- Folic acid, B6 & B12 with estrogen & progesterone

Approach with caution

- Licorice root & Spiro – there is much discussion about whether this is super supportive, or harmful!
 - People taking DHEA
- Liver herbs that may interfere with hormones (examples: milk thistle, burdock)

Flower essences to consider

Related to gender identity and also patriarchy:

- Calla lily
- Grace FES formula
- Mountain pride
- Shasta lily
- Cherry
- Alpine lily
- Sunflower

Flower essences

Related to social or
body dysphoria /
feelings about this:

- Pretty face
- Crab apple
- Rosemary
- Manzanita

Flower essences

Related to trauma,
whether physical
(like surgery) or
emotional:

- Magenta self-healer FES formula
- Post-trauma stabilizer FES formula
- Pink monkeyflower
- Sacred heart FES formula
- Star of Bethlehem
- Arnica
- Dogwood
- Rescue remedy
- Golden ear drops

Flower essences

To make you
strong!

- Saguaro
- Walnut
- Borage
- Pine
- Yarrow

Resources I used

- Vilde Chaya & Larken Bunce,
<https://sites.google.com/vtherbcenter.org/transhealth/>
- Dori Midnight,
<http://www.sfherbalist.com/holistic-health-for-transgender-gender-variant-folks/>
- Kara Siegler, <http://www.sfherbalist.com/>
- Jakery, <https://jjakery.wordpress.com/>
- Teaching I received from from Ember Peters of
<https://www.wildcurrentherbalism.com/>
- Paper by Linden de Voil summarizing risks with hormone use
- My own herbal knowledge & my & my community's experiences with surgery & hormones
 - Center of Excellence for Transgender Health at UCSF
 - BC's Trans Health Information Program / Trans Health BC

Larkin offers herbal surgery support. Get in touch.



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