Gender Dysphoria Clinic
352 South Road
Hampton East VIC 3188
Tel: (03) 9556 5216  (Tuesday & Wednesday ONLY)
Fax: (03) 9556 5256
Email: genderclinic@monashhealth.org
Web: www.monashhealth.org/page/gender_dysphoria

Gender Dysphoria Clinic Referral Pathway

The Monash Gender Dysphoria Clinic aims to assist clients experiencing Gender Dysphoria through:

- conducting specialist mental health assessments relevant to gender dysphoria in accordance with international guidelines (World Professional Association for Transgender Health Standards of Care v7);
- referring, where appropriate, to experienced private clinicians who are able to assist with hormone therapy, surgery, psychotherapy or voice therapy;
- providing ongoing mental health support during an individual’s gender transition;
- conducting multidisciplinary meetings to co-ordinate care for clients.

Access to specialist assessments is available publicly or privately. If you are interested in attending the Monash Gender Dysphoria Clinic (at no cost to you, but with a lengthy waitlist):

- please request a referral to the Gender Dysphoria Clinic from your GP;
- complete the General Information Form found at the end of the Information Pack.

_We will only be able to book an appointment once we have received both your GP referral and completed General Information Form._

A number of private clinicians are also able to conduct the specialist assessments. These clinicians often have a shorter waitlist; however, there are usually out-of-pocket costs. A list of private providers is attached. If you are interested in attending a private clinician, please note that:

- private psychiatrists need a referral from a GP or other medical practitioner;
- private clinical psychologists need a Mental Health Care Plan created by a GP;
- appointments with private clinicians can be made by contacting them directly.

If you have any questions, please refer to the Information Pack or contact us by telephone or email. Please note that we are only open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, if you would like to speak to someone on the phone.

Thank you.

Jaco Erasmus
Head of Unit
Gender Dysphoria Clinic
Information Pack for Potential Clients

Thank you for enquiring about our clinic. We hope the information here is of help to you. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the clinic, but please remember we are only open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9am to 5pm.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

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1. **THE GENDER DYSPHORIA CLINIC**

The Gender Dysphoria Clinic is part of the Monash Health network in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. It also has links with the Monash University Department of Psychological Medicine. The clinic is the largest government-funded clinic of its kind in Australia, and it also receives referrals from neighbouring states. The clinic aims to provide an assessment and treatment service for patients experiencing Gender Dysphoria.

The clinic’s primary client base is people who identify with a gender other than their birth-assigned gender, and wish to make their body as congruent as possible with their affirmed gender. The staff at the clinic conduct specialist mental health assessments relevant to gender dysphoria and, where appropriate, assist clients with the “transition process” from one gender to another, often through various gender reassignment stages including hormone therapy and surgery.

The clinic has several permanent part-time staff members, as well as several clinical associates. All clinical staff, including associates, meet regularly in order to evaluate the progress of patients.

Procedures within the clinic are consistent with the Standards of Care (Version 7, 2011) published by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) and endorsed by the Australian and New Zealand Professional Association for Transgender Health (ANZPATH).

2. **GENDER DYSPHORIA**

“Gender Dysphoria” is a term that describes the *discomfort and unhappiness* a person experiences as a result of the tension between the gender assigned at birth and the gender with which they identify (including non-binary gender identities). We acknowledge that not everybody experiencing diversity in gender expression necessarily experiences distress.

While it is not considered a psychiatric disorder to have a gender identity which differs from the gender assigned to you at birth, it is very important to rule out other conditions. As a result, the clinic takes great care to ensure that patients referred for gender reassignment are not experiencing gender dysphoria due to a treatable mental health condition, such as Dissociative Identity Disorder or some forms of psychotic disorders. In addition, the purpose of the assessment is to identify supports that may help prior to starting any medical treatments leading to gender affirmation. These could include referrals to appropriate services for assistance with housing, employment and social isolation, etc.

Staff at the clinic seek to work with our clients to establish the best medical and social options for each individual. As the WPATH Standards of Care note:

> “While many individuals need both hormone therapy and surgery to alleviate their gender dysphoria, others need only one of these treatment options and some need neither. ... Health professionals can assist gender dysphoric individuals with affirming their gender identity, exploring different options for expression of that identity, and making decisions about medical treatment options for alleviating gender dysphoria (p9).”
3. **The Clinic’s Assessment Process**

You have the choice of obtaining a specialist mental health assessment either in the public or private health system.

**Public Health System**

The Monash Gender Dysphoria Clinic offers this assessment through the public system, with no out-of-pocket costs, but with a long waiting list. If you would like to take this option, please complete the General Information Form, which you will find at the end of this Information Pack, and obtain a referral to our clinic from your GP.

*Please note that we will not be able to offer you an appointment until we have received both of these documents.*

As a new patient, you will then be offered appointments to see one of the mental health professionals at the clinic. An initial series of interviews (approximately 3-6 sessions based on your needs) is the first phase of the assessment process; it may also include, with your consent, a detailed psychological assessment and/or a family assessment by other clinical staff.

All new assessments are discussed at regular staff meetings during the year. This means that decisions regarding the outcome of the initial psychiatric/psychological assessments are made by the team as a whole, and not by an individual member. Anyone assessed as not being appropriate for gender reassignment therapy will be offered support to find ways of living with their Gender Dysphoria/gender variance, which do not involve medical treatments. They can also be offered the option to be re-assessed in the future, following other non-medical interventions.

If clients are approved for gender reassignment therapies and wish to proceed, they can be referred to other clinicians for:

- hormonal treatment to masculinise the body (partially irreversible) or feminise the body (which is largely reversible);
- and, if appropriate and when additional criteria are met, surgical procedures (which are largely irreversible).

These services are not offered directly at the clinic. Instead you will be referred to a private practitioner, who will be able to advise you of their charges when you make your appointment with them. The clinic is also able to provide referrals and information regarding speech therapy, which is conducted outside of the Clinic with a nominal charge.

**Private Practitioners**

There are both psychiatrists and clinical psychologists working in the private sector who are able to complete specialist gender-related mental health assessments (please see attached list). If you are already seeing a mental health clinician, for example, psychologist, counsellor or psychiatrist, we suggest choosing to see a private psychiatrist who specialises in gender dysphoria for your assessment.
Clinicians working in the private system usually have significantly shorter waiting lists than the Gender Dysphoria Clinic. There are, however, out-of-pocket costs to see a private clinician, which can range from $20 to $100 per session. For up-to-date information regarding waiting times and costs, please contact the clinicians directly. Contact details are provided in the attached list of private clinicians. You will also need to contact them directly to organize an appointment.

4. THE STANDARDS OF CARE

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health publishes clinical guidelines (the “Standards of Care”), which clinical staff follow. This is to ensure that the highest standard of care is provided to all the clients who attend the clinic.

The Standards of Care, which are readily available from the internet or upon request from the clinic, cover mental health evaluation and diagnosis, psychotherapy where indicated, real life experience, hormone therapy and surgery. Although the guidelines are sometimes seen as restrictive, the clinic prefers to adopt a cautious approach in order to reduce the likelihood of regretting treatment. However, the clinic applies the guidelines in a way that recognises a person’s unique anatomical, social or psychological situation, which may suggest that a flexible approach will achieve a better outcome for the person but still in a safe manner.

5. THE REAL LIFE EXPERIENCE

The Real Life Experience is a period of time (usually 12 months) prior to surgical intervention where people live in the role of their preferred gender. This period of time allows the person to develop stability in their affirmed gender, and to build confidence in their ability to live in the affirmed gender role. It is also intended to raise awareness of the personal and social consequences of transition; this is very important because changing one’s gender expression has been known to contribute to employment discrimination, marital problems and divorce, and the restriction or loss of contact with children.

Many people find that the Real Life Experience allows time for improvement in mental health, and during the Real Life Experience, a mental health professional will explore the impact of your transition on family, relationships, finances and legal issues. These review sessions may, in addition, involve considering how you are functioning as a member of society according to your ability to be employed, or function as a student or volunteer. This process is consistent with the Standards of Care.

6. MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT & INTERVENTION

A comprehensive mental health assessment is a very important part of the clinic’s work with clients. In addition, ongoing monitoring or psychotherapy, normally occurs concurrently with the Real Life Experience and involves forming a trusting relationship with a mental health clinician in order to explore their gender identity.

As everyone is unique, there is no predetermined or recommended number of sessions. Meeting regularly with a mental health clinician is an important means of receiving support, finding the best
set of medical and social options for the individual, working through difficulties where they arise and addressing expectations of the possibilities of transgender treatments and gender transition. This process usually covers a broad range of issues in order to consider all the circumstances that will help an individual who is transitioning achieve stability and satisfaction in their lives.

7. SPEECH THERAPY

It is important to recognise that a person’s birth-assigned gender is often reflected in their voice and the way they communicate. Therefore, it is possible that you may request voice modification to reflect your affirmed gender. People who wish to modify their voice or communication style in preparation for gender transition can ask for a referral to the Latrobe University’s Voice Clinic. (Referral may also be recommended by your individual clinician.)

Therapy can be arranged at any time during your transition process - it may range from one or two sessions for voice analysis and advice, to regular weekly sessions for focused voice modification at a reasonable cost. Because the therapy targets a person’s individual needs, it is not possible to say how many sessions are required to maximise voice potential.

8. HORMONAL TREATMENT

Hormone treatment plays an important role in the physical and psychological transition process for many clients who attend the clinic. Hormones are prescribed by a medical specialist (an endocrinologist) or experienced General Practitioner who must be satisfied that the person is medically stable and that there are no physical contra-indications to hormonal therapy.

Please be advised that hormones are not prescribed by mental health clinicians at the clinic. However, if appropriate, we will assist in referring you to an experienced clinician in private practice once your mental health assessment has been completed. Obtaining hormones without a prescription is strongly discouraged by the clinic.

Birth-assigned males treated with feminising hormones can expect treatment to result in breast growth, some redistribution of fat, decreased body hair, slowing or stopping of male pattern balding, decreased testicular size, reduced fertility and less frequent, less firm erections, with possible loss of libido.

Birth-assigned females treated with masculinising hormones can expect a permanent deepening of the voice, permanent clitoral enlargement, mild breast shrinkage, reduced fertility, increased upper body strength, weight gain, facial and body hair growth, increased libido, decreased fat on the hips and possibly male pattern baldness.

There can be medical and psychological side effects for all people receiving hormonal treatment. The criteria to commence hormone therapy as specified in the Standards of Care must be satisfied prior to referral to the hormone prescriber.
9. SURGICAL INTERVENTION

For some people, surgery is an important step in the transition process, and involves generally irreversible surgical procedures aimed at providing anatomical congruence consistent with their affirmed gender.

Surgery is available here in Australia, but some people choose to pursue surgery overseas; the Gender Dysphoria Clinic does not have any official links with any overseas surgeons. It is important to understand that reputable overseas surgeons follow the same Standards of Care as our clinic. Therefore, they often ask for some correspondence from the clinic confirming that all the criteria have been met to undergo gender affirmation surgery.

Surgery for birth-assigned males can include removal of the testicles and penis, and the creation of a vagina. Some individuals may also wish to pursue breast enlargement, rhinoplasty, laryngoplasty (shaving of the “Adam’s apple”), vocal cord surgery, and/or facial feminisation surgery.

Surgery for birth-assigned females can include removal of the breasts, and removal of the uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries. Surgery to create a penis (phalloplasty) or metoidioplasty (clitoral release) is associated with a number of complications that have led to the discontinuation of these procedures in Australia. However, these procedures are still performed overseas.

The surgeon will provide detailed information to the client prior to the operation, including the nature of the surgical procedure, risks and possible complications and the costs involved.

10. HEALTH INSURANCE

For clients who wish to proceed to surgery, it is imperative that private health insurance – with the highest level of hospital cover – is obtained, in order to cover some of the cost of these procedures. However, even with the highest level of private health insurance cover, there is still a significant gap payment. Please note that all health insurance companies have waiting periods. Recent changes to health funds now require that clients have psychiatric cover to ensure payment for gender-related surgeries.

If you wish to pursue treatment outside of Australia, please be advised that you will not be eligible for any government or insurance rebates, and you will have to pay the full cost (travel, medical fees, accommodation) yourself.
11. **Taking the First Step & Obtaining a Referral**

In order to make an appointment we need to receive the following:

1. A doctor’s referral
2. A completed one-page General Information Form (Attached).

A month before your first appointment please provide the following:

1. A report or psychiatric assessment from any previous or current mental health clinician you may have seen or may be seeing.
2. A brief (1-2 pages) autobiographical statement explaining how gender dysphoria or gender variance has developed in your life, including information regarding schooling, friends, family and occupation.

This can give us an understanding of your background before we meet with you and provides an opportunity for you to consider your thoughts and feelings in your own written words.

You can email, post or fax your referral and paperwork to:

The Clinical Director  
Gender Dysphoria Clinic - Monash Health  
352 South Road, Hampton East VIC 3188  
Tel: (03) 9556 5216 (Tuesday & Wednesday ONLY)  
Fax: (03) 9556 5256  
Email: genderclinic@monashhealth.org

**FINALLY...**

It is important to remember that the assessment and management of gender dysphoria is complex and different for all individuals, and that body-changing interventions are not appropriate for all clients, or preferred by them. Diagnosis, treatment and side effects differ from one person to the next, therefore, this information is an outline only and should **NOT** be understood as a substitute for specific advice from an appropriate health professional.

It is also important to note that the reality of gender dysphoria can also have a profound effect on the well-being of those who share lives with people experiencing these conditions, including parents, partners, children, friends and colleagues. It is important that careful consideration be given to their needs and usually it is recommended to seek professional advice before discussing these issues. We hope this information answers some of your immediate questions. We are happy to hear from you, if you require further information.
Gender Dysphoria Clinic
GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED IS TREATED AS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

LEGAL NAME: ______________________________________________________

PREFERRED NAME: ____________________________________________________

NAME FOR CORRESPONDENCE: _________________________________________

RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: ______________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____________________________________________________

HEALTHCARE CARD: YES / NO NUMBER: ________________________________

*Please keep us updated of any changes to the above information*

BIRTH DATE: ______/____/____

MEDICARE NUMBER: --- --- --- --- --- --- --- --- --- --- Ref No ---- Expiry Date: ____/____

TELEPHONE (Home): ___________________ (Mobile): ____________________

CONTACT PERSON / NEXT OF KIN: __________________ PH: ______________

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE: YES / NO

HEALTH INSURANCE FUND: _________________ MEMBER NO.: ______________

REFERRAL DATE OF REFERRAL: ____/____

REFERRING DOCTOR: Dr. __________________ TELEPHONE: __________________

If we need to contact you by phone:

If someone else answers the phone, can we identify the clinic’s name and ask for you to call us back?

We must only speak with you, the patient

We can leave a message on your home answering machine

We can leave a message on your mobile phone voicemail

Please circle

YES NO

YES NO

YES NO

YES NO

By signing here, you acknowledge that you have received this information pack and consent to information being shared amongst the clinicians associated with the clinic.

Name: __________________ Signature: __________________ Date: ____/____/____

OFFICE USE ONLY

ALLOCATED CLINICIAN: ___________________
Psychiatrists

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