

Self advocacy in health care

Talking about gender-affirming care with your provider

It can be challenging to speak to a care provider about gender-affirming or trans health care. You may not know how to bring it up or you may be concerned about their response. Here are a few tips to help start these conversations.

Book appointments:

The first step is to book an appointment. While this might seem simple, sometimes feeling anxious can make this a challenge. If you find this hard, consider asking someone for support. For example, a friend or family member can be with you while you call or book it on your behalf.

Most appointments are 10-15 minutes long and there is usually only time to discuss one topic. At the first visit, you can share your goals and make a plan to address them. You can also discuss whether booking a series of appointments in advance would be helpful.

Remember:

Generally, you cannot address every issue in one visit. Book a series of appointments to make sure there will be time to take care of each of your goals.

Be prepared:

Think of goals or concerns you would like to speak about. Make a list and then organize it from the most to the least important. Bring this list to your appointment - you can give it to your provider if you have a hard time starting the conversation.

Here are some questions to help you identify topics you might like to bring up:

1. What care do I need? (ie: hormone therapy, surgery, trying a medication, options for caring for my mental health, etc)
2. What kind of support am I looking for? (ie: getting more information, providing referrals, updating my name and/or pronouns, or helping me move forward with hormones or surgery, etc)
3. Is there anything about my gender and how it relates to my health that I want to share?

Anticipate a bit of waiting:

Not all clinicians have learned how to provide gender-affirming care and they may need to consult colleagues or resources before they can get you started. Some may not feel ready or confident to provide certain aspects of care and may refer you to providers with more experience.

If your provider is not sure how or where to start, you can suggest the following:

- **contact Trans Care BC** for information, resources, or supports
- access **clinical resources & guidelines**
- speak with an expert on the **RACE Line** about how to get started
- review **Trans Care BC's handouts for health care providers**

Your care pathway may take longer than you had hoped or may not be what you expected. Counselling and peer supports may be helpful while you wait.

Follow up:

It is common to need more than one appointment to address a single health care goal or concern. Book and attend follow up appointments so you can continue the conversation, review lab results or consult reports, and keep your care moving forward.

Know your rights:

You have a right to be treated with dignity and respect by your care providers. This includes having the right to be acknowledged by your correct name, pronoun, and gender.

For information about your rights in healthcare, tips on how to communicate your needs and requests, and pathways to file complaints, check out **Trans Rights BC**.