

Gender-Affirming Services in Nova Scotia

A resource from the Canadian Queer
Medical Students Association, cqmsa.org



FOREWORD

Gender-affirming medical services are available and accessible in Nova Scotia. This guide provides information concerning various aspects of gender affirming care, including healthcare coverage, legal name changes, medication, surgery and other local resources. To begin the process of medical transition such as getting hormones, a patient will need to be followed by a family doctor, pediatrician, or endocrinologist. Alternatively, there are medical clinics who take in trans patients to begin or to continue transition-related care. A list of these clinics can be found in the next section entitled “Gender-Inclusive Clinics”. The following discussion only applies to people covered by the public provincial healthcare insurance, [Nova Scotia Medical Services Insurance \(MSI\)](#). If a patient has private insurance, the coverage of these services may differ.

DISCLAIMER: this document was created by the Canadian Queer Medical Students Association (CQMSA) with the intention of helping medical providers in Quebec navigate and provide gender-affirming care. This document contains a collection of services and providers which are constantly changing, especially given the nature of the work and the increased stress and demand which community organizations have experienced with COVID-19. We have done our best to provide up-to-date content but cannot promise the continued accessibility of some of these services. Please read with discretion. If you notice incorrect information, or you would like to notify us about different resources, please email: info@cqmsa.org

We thank you for your efforts in providing appropriate and informed care!

– *The Canadian Queer Medical Students Association (CQMSA)*

Authors: Rit Charoenpanon (he/him, UBC), Julia Hildebrand (she/her, Western), Miles Llewellyn (they/them, Memorial NL), Taylor Morganstein (she/her, McGill), Andrew Trasolini (he/him, Dalhousie), Rit Charoenpanon (he/him, UBC)

Editor: Nadia Boukina (she/they, University of British Columbia)

For the Canadian Queer Medical Students Association

Legal deposit, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2024.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial- ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.



PROVINCIAL HEALTHCARE COVERAGE

Residents of Nova Scotia are insured by the *Nova Scotia Medical Services Insurance (MSI)*. You are eligible for medical coverage under MSI if you meet **all of the following criteria**:

- 1) a Canadian Citizen or "Permanent Resident" (Landed Immigrant);
- 2) a resident who makes his/her/their permanent home in Nova Scotia;
- 3) present in the province 183 days every calendar year; and
- 4) registered with MSI.

You are not eligible if:

- You are a member of the Canadian Armed Forces (however, family members are eligible on the date they establish residency in Nova Scotia)
- You are a member of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (however, family members may be eligible to apply for Medical Services Insurance (MSI) on the date they establish residency in Nova Scotia)
- You are a full-time student from another Canadian province

For complete information on MSI eligibility, please visit [this website](#).

MSI covers various health services including appointments with your family doctor, visits to walk-in clinics, complete obstetrical care, all necessary referred specialist services, visits to an emergency room, medical tests and surgeries. A complete list of covered services can be found at [this website](#).

NAME AND GENDER MARKER CHANGES

Changing Legal Identity Markers

Having identification documents (IDs) that match your gender identity and gender expression is an important part of being able to participate in society safely, with dignity and privacy. Below you will find details about any application criteria, forms, supporting documentation and fees for making these changes. **The information provided is sourced from prideHealth through the Nova Scotia Health Authority ([Legal Transition - Navigating Trans and Gender-diverse Health Care - LibGuides at Nova Scotia Health](#)).** This resource contains all the relevant and comprehensive information for legal transition in Nova Scotia.

Name Change

To change your name, the applicant must have been born in Nova Scotia or lived in Nova Scotia for at least 3 months immediately before applying. If they are under 16, a parent or guardian must apply on their behalf. The process to legally change one's name requires a formal Certificate of Change of Name. The process takes 3 to 5 months and costs roughly 200\$. The application procedure can be found here: [Change your name or the name of your spouse or child - Government of Nova Scotia](#)

Please note that there is a different application form if one would like to change their name and sex indicator at the same time. All forms can be obtained by contacting [Vital Statics](#).

Sex Indicator/Gender Marker Change

In Nova Scotia, you can change the gender marker on your government-issued identification documents through Vital Statistics. You may change the sex indicator to M, F or X. To change your name, the applicant must have been born in Nova Scotia or lived in Nova Scotia for at least 3 months immediately before applying. There are separate application processes based on age (above/below 16 years old). This process is free. Please see the following pages for instructions:

- Under 16 years old: [Change your sex indicator if you're 15 or younger - Government of Nova Scotia](#)
- Above 16 years old: [Change your sex indicator if you're 16 or older - Government of Nova Scotia](#)

Other Provincial Legal Documents to Update

Please view the section "Other Legal Documents to Get After a Certificate of Change of Name" at the following link for information regarding updating one's driver's license, health card, social insurance card, passport, permanent resident card and citizenship certificate: [Legal Transition - Navigating Trans and Gender-diverse Health Care - LibGuides at Nova Scotia Health](#)

MEDICATION

Age of Medical Consent

In Nova Scotia, the age of medical consent is the same as the age of majority (19 years old). However, like many Canadian provinces and territories, Nova Scotia follows a common law principle in which minors who are deemed capable of making informed decisions about their health may do so without the consent of a legal guardian. These laws are not written anywhere and different providers can have varying definitions and requirements for their younger patients to be deemed capable of making these kinds of decisions. Additionally, the type of medical treatment being requested and the assumed risk of treatment, might change a provider's willingness to treat a minor without a guardian's consent. For example, if a minor is wanting to start birth control pills without parental consent and the patient can maturely understand the risks and proper use of the medication, then a provider may be willing to prescribe these pills without involving any legal guardians. However, if the same minor decides that they would like to undergo a surgical procedure which carries more risk or long-term impact, for example a hysterectomy, this provider may decide that the minor is not capable of making this decision alone. Since these decisions are at the discretion of each individual provider, it is recommended that you talk with your provider and get a clear understanding of what will be kept confidential/what treatments you can consent to as a minor before starting any medical therapy. If you are concerned about your guardian learning about information you have disclosed/would like to disclose to a provider, then we recommend you specify this to your provider.

Medication

Hormone therapy is an important part of gender-affirming care which promotes physiologic masculinization/feminization for people experiencing gender incongruence. The decision to start gender affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) should be patient-centered and involves informed consent including discussion of the potential risks of starting and withholding treatment. Patients should be assessed for their physical and psychological readiness for hormone therapy prior to starting treatment. If you are considering prescribing these medications in your clinical practice, we suggest reviewing the [WPATH Standards of Care](#) and [Rainbow Health Point-of-Care Guidelines](#) for assessing patient preparedness, safety and clinical monitoring.

For transitioning individuals, the main bulk of hormone medications are: androgens for folks Assigned Female at Birth (AFAB), estrogen for folks Assigned Male at Birth (AMAB) and hormone blockers.

For dosing guidelines and recommendations, please refer to the [BC Endocrine Therapy Guidelines for Transgender Adults \(2015\)](#).

All relevant and comprehensive information for accessing Gender-affirming hormones in Nova Scotia can be accessed here: [Gender-affirming Hormones - Navigating Trans and Gender-diverse Health Care - LibGuides at Nova Scotia Health](#)

Coverage for Prescription Drugs in Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Pharmacare Programs

The Family Pharmacare program is available to anyone with a valid Nova Scotia Health Card.

To be eligible for the Family Pharmacare Program, you must:

- Be a resident of Nova Scotia with a valid Nova Scotia Health Card
- Agree to family income verification through Canada Revenue Agency each year
- Agree to provide family size information each year

Information regarding eligibility and enrolment can be found here: [Family Pharmacare Program | novascotia.ca](https://novascotia.ca/family-pharmacare-program/)

For more information please visit: [Information for Nova Scotians | novascotia.ca](https://novascotia.ca/information-for-nova-scotians/)

Medication	Commercial Name	Type	Dose Strength
Androgens (AFAB)			
Danazol	Cyclomen	Capsules	50 mg
			100 mg
			200 mg
Testosterone	AndroGel	Topical gel	1% (2.5g)
	Taro-Testosterone Gel		
	AndroGel		1% (5.0g)
	Taro-Testosterone Gel		
	Testim 1%		
Testosterone	Androderm	Transdermal patch	2.5 mg or 5 mg
Testosterone cypionate	Depo-Testosterone	Injectable solution	100mg/mL, 10mL
	Taro-Testosterone Cypionate		100mg/10mL, 10mL
Testosterone enanthate	Delatestryl	Injectable solution	200mg/mL, 5mL

Estrogens (AMAB)			
17β-Estradiol	Estrace	Tablet	0.5mg
			1.0mg
			2.0mg
	Lupin-Estradiol	Tablet	0.5mg
			1.0mg
			2.0mg
	Vagifem 10	Vaginal suppository	10mcg
Conjugated estrogen	Premarin	Vaginal cream	0.625mg/g
		Tablet	0.625mg
Gonadotropins (“puberty blockers”)			
Goserelin Acetate	Zoladex	Injectable solution	3.6mg
Leuprolide Acetate	Lupron Depot PSD	Injectable solution	3.75 mg
			7.5 mg
			11.25 mg
			22.5 mg
			30 mg
Anti-Androgens			
Spironolactone	Aldactone	Tablet	25mg
			100mg
	Jamp Spironolactone	Tablet	25mg
			100mg
	Teva-Spironolactone	Tablet	25mg
	Mint-Spirozine	Tablet	25mg
			100mg
Testosterone blocker			
Dutasteride	Various	Tablet	0.5mg
Finasteride	Various	Tablet	5mg

Source: Nova Scotia Formulary ([Formulary](#))

Gender-Affirming Services

While some gender affirming medical procedures and medications are accessible in Nova Scotia, it is important to note that some surgeries are not available. For those that are not available, Nova Scotia's Medical Services Insurance (MSI) will be funded if performed at the GrS in Montreal, Quebec. Below is a table conveying information about gender-affirming services, including whether the service or procedure is covered by MIS, the criteria required for approval and names of organizations and clinics who can provide these services.

All relevant and comprehensive information for accessing Gender-affirming services in Nova Scotia can be accessed here: [Gender-affirming Surgery - Navigating Trans and Gender-diverse Health Care - LibGuides at Nova Scotia Health](#)

Note: The psychosocial assessment letter can be completed by physicians, nurse practitioners and specialists who have specific skills in gender-affirming care.

Medical Procedure	Insurance Coverage	Criteria for Approval	Providers
Gender-Affirming Products	No	N/A	Youth Project Venus Envy South Shore Sexual Health
Fertility Treatments	No	N/A	LGBTQI2S+ – Atlantic Assisted Reproductive Therapies
Electrolysis/Hair Removal	No	N/A	See table below for trans friendly electrolysis and laser hair removal services
Feminizing/Masculinizing Voice Therapy	Yes, via speech therapist (public)	Need Physician referral to the N.S. Hearing and Speech Centres	Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia
Psychologist	Yes, if through public system		prideHealth Nova Scotia Health
Medications			
Hormone Blockers	Yes, if through N.S. Pharmacare Program Information for Nova Scotians novascotia.ca		Gender-affirming Hormones - Navigating Trans and Gender-diverse Health Care - LibGuides at Nova Scotia Health
Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy	Yes (some routes of administration), through N.S. Pharmacare Program Information for Nova Scotians novascotia.ca		Gender-affirming Hormones - Navigating Trans and Gender-diverse Health Care - LibGuides at Nova Scotia Health

Surgeries		For more information: Gender-affirming Surgery - Navigating Trans and Gender-diverse Health Care - LibGuides at Nova Scotia Health	
AFAB Top Surgeries			
Breast Reduction	Yes	1. Letter of support by N.S. physician or surgeon and one letter from a health care provider (HCP) trained in WPATH Standards of Care (SoC) 2. Letter from family physician/nurse practitioner (NP) confirming post-op care if surgery outside N.S. 3. GAHT is NOT a requirement	<u>Community Context:</u> <i>The health authority put out a statement saying it would be covered but the behind the scenes work currently hasn't been completed for billing, access, etc.</i>
Chest Masculinization	Yes	1. Letter of support by N.S. physician or surgeon and one letter from a HCP trained in WPATH SoC 2. Letter from family physician/NP confirming post-op care if surgery outside N.S. 3. GAHT NOT a requirement	N.S.* or GrS Montreal <u>Community Context:</u> <i>*Technically they offer it in N.S. but the electronic coding for surgeon reimbursement isn't in place, so he doesn't perform it (and also doesn't have a good rep with trans community)</i>
AFAB Bottom Surgeries - Removal			
Hysterectomy	Yes		N.S. Only
Oophorectomy	Yes		N.S. Only
AFAB Bottom Surgeries - Construction			
Metoidioplasty Vaginectomy	Yes Yes	Vaginectomy requires hysterectomy 6 months before	GrS – Montreal Only
Mastectomy	Yes	1. Letter of support by N.S. physician or surgeon and one letter from a HCP trained in WPATH SoC 2. Letter from family physician/NP confirming post-op care if surgery outside N.S. 3. GAHT NOT a requirement	N.S. or GrS Montreal <i>*see note in chest masculinization re: N.S.</i>
Phalloplasty	Yes	Requires hysterectomy at least 6 months prior	GrS – Montreal only
AMAB Facial Surgeries			
Facial Feminization Surgery	No	N/A	
Tracheal Shaving	No	N/A	
AMAB Top Surgery			
Breast Augmentation	Yes	1. Breast growth <= Tanner Stage Two despite 12 continuous months of GAHT 2. Letter of support by N.S. physician or surgeon or a HCP trained in WPATH SoC 3. Letter from family physician/NP confirming post-op care if surgery outside N.S.	N.S. or GrS Montreal

AMAB Bottom Surgeries - Removal			
Orchidectomy	Yes	See Penectomy for requirements	N.S. or GrS Montreal
Penectomy	Yes	1. Letter of support by N.S. physician or surgeon and two letters from a HCP regarding psychosocial assessment (only require one if a HCP trained in WPATH SoC) 2. Letter from family physician/NP confirming post-op care if surgery outside N.S. 3. Letter from doctor supervising GAHT (if not covered in other letters)	N.S. Only -- The government website lists penectomy as covered and performed in N.S., but also lists penectomy as NOT a standalone surgery and classified it as under vaginoplasty in their “definitions” section. Thus, unclear whether one could elect to go to GrS if wanting only penectomy (typically in conjunction with orchiectomy) and not an entire vaginoplasty. Contact prideHealth for confirmation
AMAB Bottom Surgeries - Construction			
Labiaplasty	Yes	See vaginoplasty	GrS – Montreal only
Vaginoplasty	Yes	1. Letter of support by N.S. physician or surgeon and two letters from a HCP regarding psychosocial assessment (only require one if a HCP trained in WPATH SoC) 2. Letter from family physician/NP confirming post-op care if surgery outside N.S. 3. Letter from doctor supervising GAHT (if not covered in other letters) 4. 12 continuous months of living in gender role that aligns with gender identity	GrS – Montreal only
Vulvoplasty	Yes	See Vaginoplasty	GrS – Montreal only

Trans Friendly Laser Hair Removal

Name	Profession	Location	Contact	Price/Session
Aurora Aesthetics	Laser Technician	5954 Spring Garden Rd., Halifax	(902) 406-4040	5-10 sessions, \$44+/session
Atlantic Skin Care	Dermatologists and Skin Care professionals	Dartmouth Medical Centre, Suite 300	(902) 877-8250, call or text	4-8 sessions, contact for details
Julia's Electrolysis and Laser	Electrologist and Laser Professional	7 Lodge Dr., Halifax	(902) 877-8250, call or text	Laser Therapy: Maximum 8 sessions, price varies depending on treatment Electrolysis: sessions vary, price ranges from \$30-\$80/session
Colours Electrolysis	Esthetician/Electrologist	59 Portland St., Dartmouth	(902) 464-9015	Free consultation with first treatment, price ranges from \$23-\$71/treatment
Bedford Electrolysis	Electrologist	1350 Bedford Highway, Suite 4, Bedford N.S.	(902) 835-5386 or text (902) 223-2787	Free consultation, price ranges from \$33-\$77/session

RESOURCES

Gender-Affirming Product Services

Although gender-affirming products for binding, packing, tucking and padding are not covered under MIS, these products may often be found through community organizations such as queer-friendly sex shops or trans support centers, or they may be accessed through community-led services such as binder exchange programs. It may be helpful to start by searching for queer-positive sex shops or trans support centers near you. Below are a few examples of stores/programs in Nova Scotia that provide gender-affirming products:

- Youth Project
 - Provides a variety of gender affirming items to youth in need throughout the province of Nova Scotia
 - [Gender-Affirming Items](#)
- The Transformation Closet
 - A small boutique of gender affirming item including binders, gaffs and packers

- [The Transformation Closet - South Shore Sexual Health](#)

Gender-Inclusive Clinics and Resources

We know that unfortunately, not all physicians and healthcare facilities in Nova Scotia are welcoming to queer folks, or have the training needed to provide quality gender-affirming care. This can be a huge challenge when trying to access care and find a physician you trust. [prideHealth works to improve access to health services](#) which are safe, coordinated, comprehensive and culturally appropriate ([prideHealth | Nova Scotia Health](#)).

Community Groups, Social Networking and Patient Navigators

Community Groups

- **Gender Affirming Care Nova Scotia** is a by-and-for community group that is familiar with policies surrounding gender affirming care in Nova Scotia
(<https://sites.google.com/view/gacinnovascotia/accessing-gac-in-nova-scotia?authuser=0>)

Patient Navigators

If you are <19 years old then contact the **IWK's Transgender Health Team**:

- Call Central Referral at 902-464-4110 or toll-free at 1-888-470-5888 and ask to meet with the team
 - [Facing Sexuality \(IWK Health Centre\)](#)
Resources for trans and gender diverse youth offered at the IWK Health Centre.

If you are 19+ years old then contact the prideHealth Navigator:

- pridehealth@nshealth.ca, (902) 471-0867 or (902)487-0211.