

# Patient Handbook

Comprehensive Care  
for Transgender  
and Gender  
Non-Binary  
Individuals



**Mount  
Sinai**

*Center for Transgender  
Medicine and Surgery*



## Welcome to the Mount Sinai Center for Transgender Medicine and Surgery

At the Mount Sinai Center for Transgender Medicine and Surgery (CTMS), we provide comprehensive, compassionate care to transgender and gender non-binary individuals. Our team is comprised of experts in primary care, hormone therapy, behavioral health, gender-affirming surgeries and other supportive services. Together, our providers work to ensure that your medical needs are addressed and that you feel supported as a valued member of our clinic.





## Medical Care

Patients who come to our clinic will be met by providers who are knowledgeable about and skilled in the area of transgender medicine. We provide comprehensive gender-affirming care that is individualized to the health needs and goals of each patient.

### Primary Care

At CTMS, our primary care team will help keep you healthy and take care of you when you are not. A CTMS primary care provider can advise you on the most important health screens and connect you with resources that are transgender and gender non-binary affirming when you need the care of a specialist to stay healthy.

### Hormone Therapy

With expert providers on staff, we strive to give you the best possible outcomes in your hormone care. A CTMS provider will make sure that you understand the risks and benefits of hormone therapy. We will optimize your regimen both to maximize effects from hormones and to keep you safe. At the CTMS we follow a patient-centered medical approach where treatment choices are made by you and your providers in a customized fashion that considers your needs and your safety. We do not use older non-medical approaches like insisting on a “real life test” or asking you to sign waivers for recommended medication.

### Feminizing Hormone Therapy

Feminizing hormone therapy can help to develop breasts, change the shape of the face and body, and change some of the body hair growth patterns. Our providers help achieve these effects using estrogen therapy and testosterone suppressing therapy to best meet patient goals.

### Masculinizing Hormone Therapy

Testosterone therapy can help encourage development of facial and body hair, deepen the voice, change the shape of the face and body, and stop menstruation.



## Specialty Care

### Endocrinology

Our endocrinologists are experts in overseeing hormone therapy. We can also assist with general endocrine needs including:

- Weight management
- Diabetes
- Bone health
- Adrenal disorders
- Thyroid disorders
- Cardiovascular disease
- Fertility
- Interaction of hormone-therapy with other medical treatment

### Gynecology

Our team provides both routine and trans/gender non-binary-specific care. We offer hysterectomy, vaginectomy, and other gynecological procedures when desired.

### Urology

Our urology team collaborates on metoidioplasty and vaginoplasty cases, assists with post-operative care for these procedures, and offers orchiectomy, or removal of the testes. The team is also available for any issues that affect genitals or urination in general.

### Otolaryngology and Vocal Training

We offer a variety of services to help trans and gender non-binary people find a comfortable vocal pitch and avoid vocal strain. Speech-language pathologists (SLP) offer vocal coaching. Otolaryngology doctors can help with both tracheal shaves and voice feminization surgery.

### Plastic Surgery

Our plastic surgery team takes the lead in many of the trans-gender surgeries offered through CTMS including vaginoplasty, phalloplasty, chest reconstruction, and facial feminization surgeries. Our plastic surgeons work with the entire CTMS team to make sure every patient has the best possible outcome.



## Behavioral Health

We offer a wide range of behavioral health services to help with questions related to transgender treatment and other behavioral health concerns:

- Individual counseling
- Support groups
- Psychiatric evaluations
- Ongoing medication management
- Pre-surgical evaluations
- Pre-and post-surgical psychotherapeutic support
- Education for individuals and their families
- Trauma-informed therapy

During an initial evaluation, the CTMS behavioral health team will work with you to outline a treatment plan to help you be as healthy as possible.



## Transgender Surgeries

We perform a variety of surgical procedures in our state-of-the-art operating rooms. We will work with you to understand your goals and develop a plan to meet your needs.

CTMS follows the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's (WPATH) Standards of Care guidelines for helping transgender and gender non-binary people access surgery. We also work to satisfy requirements established by your insurance company to make sure the desired procedures are covered.

In order to make sure recovery goes as well as possible, we ask all of our patients to be as healthy as possible prior to surgery. Any medical conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes must be well-controlled before surgery. It is also very important that there is no nicotine in your system as nicotine can interfere with healing. Your body-mass index (BMI), which is a measurement of your height compared to your weight, must be at 35 or below for metoidioplasty, phalloplasty, or vaginoplasty. Having a higher BMI will put you at increased risk for complications from these procedures. If you have any known medical conditions, such as heart disease or an organ transplant, please bring records from your medical provider to your first visit stating that you are okay to have surgery.





## Ambulatory Procedures

Ambulatory surgeries do not require an overnight stay in the hospital. If your pain is controlled and there are no complications, you can go home the same day. These surgeries are also sometimes called outpatient or same-day procedures.

### Orchiectomy

Orchiectomy is the removal of testes. All other tissues and parts of the genitals remain. Many people who seek elimination of testosterone production without undergoing full genital reconstruction pursue this procedure.

This procedure can be done under general or local anesthesia. Most people recover in one to two weeks.

### Breast Augmentation

In a breast augmentation, the surgeon inserts implants into the chest to create a more feminine-appearing chest. Our surgeons sometimes take fat from other parts of your body (thigh, buttocks, and belly) to help achieve the best result. At your consultation, the surgeon will discuss what options will provide the best outcome.

This procedure is done under general anesthesia. Most people recover in one to two weeks.

### Voice Feminization Surgery

CTMS surgeons use a technique called Wendler glottoplasty. This procedure shortens the length of the vocal cords to change a voice to a higher pitch. Webbing is placed over a portion of the vocal cords to immobilize them. Vocal coaching with a speech and language pathologist is required prior to surgery.

Recovery from this procedure involves not speaking for one week after surgery. You can gradually increase the amount of talking that is possible over the course of a month.



### Chest Masculinization

During chest masculinization surgery, the surgeon removes breast and fat tissue to create a masculine-appearing chest.

At your consultation, you can talk to the surgeon about your goals. The surgeon will then recommend the best surgical approach to meet your needs.

Chest masculinization requires general anesthesia. After surgery, you will have a compression vest and surgical drains. The drains are removed several weeks after surgery. You must wear the compression vest for at least four weeks post-operatively. You will have gradual improvement over several months to a year. Most people can resume regular daily activities after three months.

### Hysterectomy

Hysterectomy is the removal of the uterus and ovaries under general anesthesia, completed by our OB/GYN team. Most people recover within two to four weeks after surgery.



## Inpatient Procedures

Inpatient procedures require staying in the hospital for at least one night.

For these surgeries, you will meet with a medical provider, a mental health provider, and a social worker before seeing a surgeon. Each person you meet with will help you get ready for surgery. Friends and family are welcome at these visits. All questions about surgery can be answered at the initial medical visit.

The social worker will help plan things like housing and caregivers after surgery. If you are coming from outside of NYC, the CTMS team requires that you stay within 2 hours of our surgery offices for your recovery period. The social worker will help you make these plans.

Recovering from surgery can be difficult and frustrating. The mental health provider will help you prepare for your recovery as best as possible.

After completing these three appointments, the surgeon's office will call you to schedule a consultation.

You may have to make physical preparations for your surgical procedure. We will discuss this with you at your initial medical visit. For instance, genital surgeries often require hair removal in the area on your body where the surgery will take place. We will schedule your surgery date with these preparations in mind.

### Facial Feminization Surgery

Facial feminization includes a variety of procedures including:

- Forehead and brow bone reshaping
- Jaw and chin contouring,
- Nose reshaping (rhinoplasty)
- Hairline advancement
- Tracheal shave

A plastic surgeon will work with you to discuss your goals and options to tailor surgery to meet your needs.

Facial Feminization is performed under general anesthesia and normally requires one night in the hospital after surgery. Most people recover in two weeks.

### Vaginoplasty

Vaginoplasty, or the creation of a vagina, is a complex surgery that can have a major impact on your health. We want you to have the best possible experience with this procedure and will help to get you as ready as you can be to get this life-changing surgery.

It is important to have certain areas of your genital hair removed prior to getting vaginoplasty. If hair grows inside your vagina, it can cause problems after surgery. There is often some re-growth even after ideal treatment. Electrolysis or laser hair removal will help. Our medical providers can recommend the best option for you.

### Metoidioplasty

During metoidioplasty, plastic and urological surgeons collaborate to create a phallus from the clitoris. They release the ligament holding down the clitoris, and tissue from the front pelvic opening and labia tissue to connect the urethra to the tip of the phallus if desired. The result is a small phallus that can become erect. Hysterectomy and vaginectomy (removal of the front pelvic opening) can be done at the same time.

Metoidioplasty can be done with or without extending the urethra to allow urination out of the tip of the phallus. Our surgeons can also create a scrotum and insert testicular implants depending on your preference. After metoidioplasty, there is a three to five day hospital stay, and you may go home with a tube in your stomach that will help drain your urine. Recovery can take six to eight weeks, and problems with urinary flow are very common, but often resolve on their own.

### Phalloplasty

Phalloplasty is a multiple stage procedure that creates a phallus from skin taken from somewhere on your body and moved to the pelvic area. The number of steps and length of the hospital stay vary depending on how the phallus is created and whether or not the urethra is extended to the tip of the phallus.

The CTMS team will work with you to help you achieve your phalloplasty goals and start customizing your treatment plan from the beginning of your first medical visit.

## Support Services

### Social Work

At CTMS, we support our patients by offering individual and group social work services. Our social workers conduct comprehensive psychosocial assessments, link patients to community resources, and provide counseling and group support. Social workers also guide patients through the surgical process by securing stable aftercare plans and reliable support systems for gender-affirming procedures.

### Trauma Care and Support Services

CTMS collaborates with the Crime Victims Treatment Center, Inc. (CVTC) to offer the Transgender Healing and Resilience Initiative for Survivors of Violence (THRIV). This program offers gender affirming, trauma-focused therapy specifically for transgender and gender non-binary survivors of interpersonal violence and trauma, ages 13 and up. Depending on the needs of the individual, services can range from a few sessions of psycho-education and skills training, to past-focused processing of traumatic experiences, including sexual and intimate partner violence, childhood sexual abuse, trafficking, hate crimes, and community violence. All services at THRIV, and at CVTC, are completely free of charge.

## Insurance

CTMS accepts most major insurance depending on provider networks and individual services. To find out whether we are covered in your provider network, it is best to contact your insurance carrier. We may also review your insurance after you enroll in our program to provide additional information.

You can take an active role in covering your care by knowing how your insurance covers gender affirming services. Your insurance carrier can give you more information about your benefits and out of pocket costs. If you are having a surgery or procedure, we will likely need to obtain pre-authorization from your insurance before you receive this service.



### Coverage for Surgeries

Insurance coverage is important for accessing surgical care. If you have general questions about whether your insurance will cover surgical procedures, you may consult your insurance plan booklet for full benefit details, or you may contact your insurance's member services line to request your plan's policy for gender affirming services. Each plan may be different, so ask for your plan's coverage for "Transgender Services" or "Gender Affirmation Surgeries."

### Billing

All charges not covered by your insurance are your responsibility. You may receive two types of bills, depending on your insurance—a professional fee to cover services performed by your provider, and a hospital fee to cover things like labs, equipment, facilities, and supplies. Both of these fees may sometimes be referred to as a "copay" or "co-insurance/co-deductible." If you do not have active coverage at the time of your visit, you will receive a bill for the full cost of the visit.

If you have questions about your copays, co-insurance/co-deductible, or any costs that may be charged to you, you may contact your insurance's member services line for more information. If you have questions about a bill you received, you may contact the billing department customer service line listed on the bill.





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