

Hormone Pellet FAQs—Men

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Hormone pellets have been used for many years to treat several medical conditions including ovarian and testicular failure. Very popular and approved for use in Europe, pellet therapy has yet to be approved by the FDA for treatment of low hormonal conditions in women, however, the branded Testipel (testosterone pellets) is currently approved by the FDA for use in men. Hundreds of medical studies demonstrate the efficacy and safety of pellets. The convenience and frequently superior results seen with pellet insertion has made their popularity rapidly grow over the past decade in treating ovarian failure/menopause and low testosterone. The frustration and difficulty of achieving therapeutic testosterone levels in men with the currently available prescription treatments has resulted in more men looking for better testosterone replacement options. Approximately 20% of men over 50 years of age are deficient in testosterone which means there are a lot of users looking for a better way of getting testosterone back to normal levels. We are proud to be able to provide this alternative option for treatment. The following information will help answer your questions regarding testosterone pellet therapy.

1. **What are pellets?** Estrogen and testosterone pellets are made from purified hormone which is processed from yams and soy. After placement under the skin, they slowly dissolve into the surrounding subcutaneous fat which is then released into the bloodstream.
2. **How are they placed?** After the skin is numbed, a small incision is made, then a large needle called a trocar is pushed under the skin. The pellets fit inside the trocar then are slid under the skin.
3. **Where are they placed?** We usually insert them under the skin in the lower abdomen. If desired, we can place them in the hip or “love handle” area.
4. **How long do they last?** Typically the pellets will last for 3-6 months. Occasionally, they absorb more quickly and will have to be replaced as soon as 2 months, but sometimes will last 8-9 months. It is hard to predict how long pellets will last in an individual until they have been placed.
5. **Are there any risks?** Any medication has potential risks. At times testosterone will elevate lipids which could then result in increased incidence of cardiovascular disease (although, more often than not, normal testosterone levels decrease weight and decrease the risk of adult onset diabetes, thus improving lipid levels and decreasing the risk of cardiovascular disease by 50%). Testosterone will also decrease sperm production, so if you are anticipating fathering a child, you need to have a long discussion with an urologist. Some studies show that testosterone use in men may increase the risk of prostate cancer, however, this is still under debate.
6. **What are the advantages of pellet therapy?** There are several, however, the biggest advantages are the ability to achieve higher, more physiologic (i.e. normal) levels of hormones which translates to simply feeling better. The blood levels remain stable throughout the majority of the time after pellet placement--this avoids the peaks and troughs which occur with traditional forms of hormone replacement. Again, normal testosterone levels improve weight control, improve energy, and decrease the risk of adult onset diabetes and cardiovascular disease. In some situations, the costs of pellets may be less than prescription hormones. Pellet therapy also avoids the need to take daily pills or apply gel daily, or deal with patches which may irritate the skin.
7. **How much do pellets cost?** Each 200 mg pellet costs \$50. Usually 3-5 pellets are required at each insertion depending on age and hormone requirements. These are purchased directly by the

patient from Dr. Aziz Pharmacy and are shipped to our office for insertion. These 200mg pellets are larger and require a special trocar kit which will be included in your bill from Dr. Aziz and will run around \$45 per kit for each insertion (they are non-reusable). Our insertion fee is \$125 (subject to change), which is less than half of what most other facilities charge. We will bill the insertion fee to your insurance along with an office visit charge. Most insurances will cover testosterone pellet insertion for men, and if we are reimbursed by your insurance for the insertion, you will be refunded your payment. Please ask us if you have any other questions regarding the billing for pellets.

8. **How will I know when it's time for more pellets?** Trust us—you will know. Basically, your symptoms will begin to return. Lab work drawn at 2 months (when blood levels peak) will also give us an idea of how you absorb and metabolize the pellets. As soon as you notice this, call so we can get you on the schedule for your next pellet insertion.
9. **Is there a limit on how long pellets can be used?** No. Pellet therapy can be used for many years and there is no age limit.
10. **What can I expect with pellet therapy?**
 - a. We always start pellet doses on the low side, so you may not notice optimal response for 6-12 months while we're trying to figure out what dose and frequency of insertion works best for you. We prefer this approach since too high a dose may result in excessive libido (not fun and can get you into trouble), increased aggressiveness, headaches, water retention, acne, and oily skin. Trust us on this one!
 - b. Hormone levels increase gradually from the moment of insertion. It may take 2-4 weeks before you start feeling the full effect. Levels peak around 2 months—that's when we check your blood levels. This helps guide us, in addition to improvement in your symptoms, (and any side-effects you may be experiencing), in determining the proper doses of pellets.
 - c. Each pellet insertion will last typically 3-6 months. After several insertions, we'll have an idea of how often you will need pellets, we will then schedule your appointments accordingly. Stress, illness, weight changes, exercise levels and other medication changes (especially thyroid meds) may change how you feel which could require a dosing adjustment. Some patients will even notice a difference based on the location (right/left, abdomen/ thigh) where the pellets are placed.
11. **What else do I need to know?**
 - a. You do not have to "qualify" for pellets. Although traditionally reserved for patients who don't tolerate or are unable to obtain adequate therapeutic response on prescription testosterone, anyone who desires the convenience and improved results of pellets may choose this option.
 - b. Testosterone replacement will make your testicles shrink and decrease sperm production. Sorry. But you will notice an improved erection and orgasm, more muscle strength, less fatigue, more stamina, fuller beard, better mood and clearer thinking.
 - c. If you have, or have had, prostate cancer or male breast cancer, you may not be a candidate for testosterone replacement.
 - d. ★★ ★★ *Do not wear white pants* or any clothes that could be ruined by blood to your insertion appointment. Although we do our best, we can't always control bleeding during and/or after insertion. ★★ ★★