

Pellet insertion information:

Initial visit: you will fill out several questionnaires to help us evaluate your symptoms and the issues that will affect your dose. We will send you for blood work to evaluation your hormone levels including thyroid testing.

Lab information: The best lab to go to is St. Vincent Hospital Physician Plaza Lab at 1631 Hospital Drive on the St Vincent hospital campus. They will get us your hormone levels within 1 day. If you choose to go to any other lab, please expect it to take **a minimum of 8 days** for us to get your results as these tests are a sendout test for most other labs. *Please make sure that we have your labs results prior to your visit if you are going to any other lab other than SVH Physician Plaza Lab.* As we do lab work prior to every insertion, this is an ongoing issue that will expedite your visit time in our office. You do not need to be fasting for your blood work. You will go for labs prior to insertion, 4 weeks after your initial insertion, and two weeks prior to each follow up insertion.

Insertion Visit: We will go over your lab results and have you sign all consent forms. We do require an up to date mammogram and pap smear prior to all pellet insertions. If you decide to proceed with pellet insertion, it will be done that day.

Pellets are inserted into the fatty tissue of the hip. We alternate sides every visit. We will have you lie down on the exam table on one side or the other. We will mark the area for pellet insertion and inject a local anesthetic into the insertion site which stings slightly at the time of injection. We then test the area prior to doing the insertion to make sure you are numb. We make a small incision (2 mm) and insert the pellet under the skin with a small trochar. We then re-approximate the edges of the skin with a steri- strip after we have applied some adhesive for the steri- strip around the incision and also apply a pressure dressing (two 4x4 gauze pads with tape).

What to expect after insertion:

You can definitely experience some discomfort and bruising at the insertion site. We recommend that you *avoid anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen or aspirin and supplements such as Ginkgo, three days prior to insertion* to avoid excessive bleeding or bruising. You can take Tylenol after the insertion for discomfort and we recommend using an ice pack or bag of frozen corn or peas on your hip that afternoon.

You should not engage in vigorous exercise for 3 days after insertion. You are fine to walk and do limited activity, but we don't want the pellets to migrate out of the incision with excessive hip movement.

You may remove the pressure dressing the morning after insertion as follows:

1. Remove the tape from your skin, but do not pull the 4x4's off of your incision as this will pull the steri-strip off with resultant problems with the incision such as increased scarring, a bump, itching at the incision due to pulling the edges of the skin open.
2. After you remove the tape only, step into your shower and let the water wash the 4x4's off of the steri strip
3. The steri strip can be removed after 3 days.
4. If the steri strip comes off before 3 days, you should reapply a butterfly band-aid to pull the skin edges back together (this is hard to do yourself, so you may need to get assistance).
5. You may shower, but no tub baths, hot tubs or swimming pools for 3 days to avoid infection of the incision.

After you remove the steri strip, you can apply vitamin E oil from a capsule to the site to avoid scarring. Some patients prefer that we use the same site over and over to have only one scar. Clients

6. with darker skin have a higher potential to have a dark mark at the incision site. Topical hydroquinone as a bleaching agent can lighten this and can be purchased over the counter in a 2% formulation

Side effects at the incision

Bruising will resolve over a 5-7 day period. If you are prone to bruising, eating pineapple before your insertion and begin taking sublingual arnica montana for 3 days prior to your insertion. Ice packs after insertion will help prevent bruising.

Tape sensitivity-some clients are very sensitive to the adhesive in some tape. We have switched to using a silk tape that tends to cause minimal reaction, however, if you are sensitive to adhesives, let us know to use paper tape.

Incision issues: It is common to have itching at the site of the incision. Redness or pain at the incision site would be very uncommon. Often, we have seen it tends to be adhesive sensitivity rather than a true incision infection, however, if you are concerned, please call us to schedule a time to have us assess the area for infection. Often, application of polysporin 2-3 times per day will alleviate any problems.

Expectations from pellet therapy

It may take up to two weeks to begin to experience improvement in symptoms from pellet therapy. If you are on any pre-existing HRT regimen, continue this for one week after pellet insertion and then discontinue.

It may take 2-3 insertions to achieve a baseline optimization of symptoms for hormones. Please be patient with your body and the process.

Initial symptom relief can be significant and then as you continue pellet therapy, you may not achieve the dramatic difference with each insertion. It is very easy to recognize symptom improvement when you are very hormone depleted, however, as you achieve baseline, you may not notice such a dramatic improvement in libido, energy, etc., with follow up insertions. Why is this? Often, you need to focus on the rest of the system-how is your stress level? How are you sleeping? Are you exercising and eating well? Pellets can only do so much and having realistic expectations is critical. If you are not feeling well or getting the benefit that you think is attributable to your hormones, we will do a hormone level to determine if your levels are in therapeutic range.

- 1) Four weeks after insertion you will go for blood work to check your hormone levels.
- 2) You will have a follow up appointment scheduled at 6 weeks after initial insertion. At that visit, we will re-assess your symptoms and your blood work and determine if we need to add a small booster hormone dose to achieve better symptom improvement. Booster doses are \$150, half the cost of the full dose insertion, \$300, and are indicated to optimize your hormone levels. They are infrequently administered, primarily only after the initial dose as your body may use the full dose very quickly after having been without hormone for so long.
- 3) You will be given a lab slip to check hormones prior to each insertion. After your initial dose, you will likely need a full dose of pellet therapy every 3 ½ to 4 months (this does not include your booster dose if needed). How will you know it is time for pellets? We will give you a time frame 3-4 months from your initial dose to start self-monitoring for symptoms. As soon as you start to feel recurrence of symptoms, go for your blood work and call to schedule your pellet insertion. This timing is very individual as some client need pellets every 3 months and others it is longer.