

# Adult Gender

## What You Should Know



### How does Gender Impact Adults?

Adult gender may include many factors. A person's sex refers to the specific biological characteristics (e.g. chromosomes) that are often used to describe a person as male or female. Gender refers to the socially defined characteristics and behaviors typical of women and men that varies from society to society and can change over time. Gender identity is how people see themselves on the inside, whether that is male, female, neither or both. Gender expression may take the form of vocal patterns, body shape and style of dress.

### Can Words Impact Adult Sexual Health?

Sometimes using the same words or terminology makes for better mutual understanding. Below are some words used around gender and adult sexual health.

#### Gender

There are many terms people use to describe their genders. Here are some words used around adult gender diversity:

- **Cisgender** is a word used when a person's gender identity and expression align with their biological sex. Such as, a person who identifies as a woman and was noted to be female at birth (often based on visible anatomy) is cisgender (cis).
- **Gender diverse** is when a person's gender identity and expression does not align with their biological sex.
- **Transgender** is a word used to include people who identify with the gender opposite of their biological sex.
- **Nonbinary** is a word used when a person feels their gender is outside of the binary gender groupings of male/man and female/woman.
- **Gender fluid** is a term used by people who do not have a fixed gender identity that stays the same at all points

in time. Gender fluid people may feel more in touch with one, many or no genders at many times.

#### Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to a person's sexual attraction to other people and may include attraction, behavior and identity. People may use many words to describe their sexual orientations. Some common sexual orientation words are:

- **Straight:** a man attracted to women, or a woman attracted to men
- **Gay:** people attracted to people of the same gender (a word used by men or women)
- **Lesbian:** a woman attracted to other women
- **Bisexual:** a person attracted to men and women, or a person attracted to people of all genders
- **Pansexual:** a person attracted to people of all genders, or whose attractions are not linked to gender
- **Queer:** a person whose sexual orientation falls outside societal expectations (\*Queer is a reclaimed term that is used in LGBT+ groups. Still, some people find this term offensive, so it is urged to only use this term if people use it for themselves)

#### What is Gender Affirmation?

Gender affirmation refers to social, legal and medical steps involved in supporting a person's expression of their gender identity. Gender affirmation can include changing a person's name and preferred pronouns, changing how someone presents themselves (e.g. how they dress), changing legal records and/or telling friends, family and co-workers about their gender. Gender-affirming health care involves any medical or mental health care that helps a person express their gender identity. Based on a person's sense of their own

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gender and how they would like to express that gender, this care can involve medical care (like hormones) and/or surgical health care. Some adults may choose to do some, all or none of these things. Each aspect of gender affirmation is a personal choice.

For some people, gender-affirming surgery (GAS) is an option. For most people, GAS only occurs after gender-affirming hormone care, pre-operative counseling and psychotherapy. There are many types of GAS, sometimes known as either “top surgery” or “bottom surgery.” People are unique, so talking with a doctor about what is right for each person is urged.

### Are there Guidelines for Gender-Affirming Surgeries (GAS)?

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health, Inc. (WPATH) has a mission to promote evidence-based care, education, research, public policy and respect in transgender health. WPATH gives guidelines for GAS and other forms of gender-affirming health care. For GAS, it is often urged that patients meet the eligibility guidelines before getting GAS. Insurance groups often need patients to follow these guidelines to get the okay for their GAS.

The guidelines (version 7) say patients should live as the gender with which they feel most comfortable for at least one year before GAS. The guidelines urge that patients get a letter from a mental health expert attesting to the patient’s gender identity, and confirming the patient grasps the irreversibility of GAS. Genital surgery is not often recommended until a patient is of legal age (18 years).

It is of great value to talk with a counselor who is trained in gender affirmation and gender dysphoria (negative feelings linked to things a person lives through or body parts that conflict with their gender identity). A mental health expert can give more details about gender diversity, gender affirmation and GAS.

### About the Urology Care Foundation

The Urology Care Foundation is the world’s leading urologic foundation – and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make health changes. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts. To learn more, visit the Urology Care Foundation’s website, **UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions** or go to **UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist** to find a doctor near you.

### Disclaimer

This information is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please talk to your urologist or health care provider about your health concerns. Always talk to a health care provider before you start or stop any treatments, including medications. For more information, visit **UrologyHealth.org/Download** or call 800-828-7866.