



Artistic Friends Happy Quiet Strong Caring Adventurous
 Energetic Lesbian & Gay Creative Light-Hearted
 Irrational Crazy Weirder Foolish Out-Going
 Sarcastic Open-Minded
 Bisexual Childish Nerdy Talkative Comical



Definations

LGB

Transgendered
Sex & Gender

1.0 Culture

- 1.1 Gay Male Culture
- 1.2 Lesbian culture
- 1.3 Bisexual culture
- 1.4 Transgender Culture
- 1.5 Youth culture

2.0 Health

- 2.1 Physical
- 2.2 Mental
- 2.3 Sexual

3.0 Comming Out

What Do I Do If A Young Person
Comes Out To Me?
Coming Out LGB
Coming Out Transgendered

Contents

Facts And Myths

LGB

Transgendered

4.0 LGBT Family

- 4.1 My Daughter Is Lesbian
- 4.2 My Son Is Gay
- 4.3 My Sibling Came Out

LGBT

5.0 Lesbian

- 5.1 What Does it Mean
- 5.2 Am I Old Enough To know?
- 5.3 What Do Lesbian's Look Like
- 5.4 Is It Normal?

6.0 Gay

- 6.1 What Does it Mean
- 6.2 Am I Old Enough To know?
- 6.3 What Do Gay's Look Like
- 6.4 Is It Normal?

7.0 Bisexual

- 7.1 What Does it Mean
- 7.2 Am I Old Enough To know?
- 7.3 What Do Bisexual's Look Like
- 7.4 Is It Normal?

8.0 Transgendered

- 8.1 What Does it Mean?
- 8.2 Am I Old Enough To know?
- 8.3 What Do Transgendered People Look Like
- 8.4 Is It Normal?
- 8.5 Possible issues for transsexuals
- 8.6 Why LGB and T

9.0 Helplines and LGBT Organizations in Northern Ireland

10.0 Other Great Organizations



Definations





Gay

A man who is physically/emotionally attracted to other men.

Lesbian/Gay

A woman who is physically/ emotionally attracted to other women.

Bisexual

A person who is attracted to both men and women.

Transgender

Someone who identifies as a different gender to that which they were assigned at birth.

Coming Out

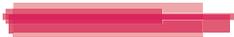
Knowing and telling people who you are and who you are attracted to.

Questioning

When someone is still unsure about their sexual orientation.

LGBT

Stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.





There are a whole host of categories within the transgender umbrella and terms associated with being transgender. Different people define themselves in different ways, below is a short list of some of the most common terms and definitions.

Transgender

An umbrella term used to include all categories within the trans community, including transsexuals, cross-dressers, androgynes, and polygender people.

Transsexual

Someone whose physical body does not match their gender identity and changes their physical appearance usually through hormones and surgery to better align their physical body and gender identity.

Transsexual man

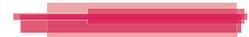
Someone who is born with a female body, but whose gender identity is male and transitions to live permanently as a man.

Transsexual woman

Someone who is born with a male body, but whose gender identity is female and transitions to live permanently as a woman.

Cross Dresser

Someone who is happy with their physical gender but dresses as the opposite gender at times for various reasons.





Intersex

Someone who is born with genitals and/or their internal reproductive organs which are not clearly male or female. Doctors may make a decision as to assign one gender shortly after birth.

Androgyne

Someone who doesn't clearly fit into the typical masculine and feminine gender roles of society physically and/or emotionally.

Polygender

People who reject defining their gender as simply male or female.

Gender Queer/Fluid

Similar to Polygender, people who see themselves as being both male and female or neither.

Drag King/Queen

Someone who dresses and takes on the persona and gender characteristics of the opposite sex usually in an exaggerated form. This is mainly for performance or fun.

Gender Dysphoria

A term used to describe when someone has ongoing uncomfortable or uncertain feelings about their assigned gender at birth.





Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

A course of hormones which are taken to replace the hormones which are naturally produced by the body as part of the transitioning process.

Gender Reassignment Surgery

Surgical procedures by which a person's physical appearance and function of their existing sexual characteristics are altered to resemble that of the other sex.

Coming Out

When someone tells someone else their gender identity (or sexual orientation). Most trans people will have to come out to many people throughout their lives.

Transphobia

Physical or verbal abuse to someone because they are or assumed to be transgender.

Going Full Time

When someone begins to live permanently as the gender they feel inside. In the UK trans people must 'go full time' for a year before having access to hormones and surgery.







LGBT culture, is the common culture shared by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people. It is sometimes also referred to as Queer culture. LGBT culture varies widely by geography and the identity of the participants.

Not all LGBT people identify by or affiliate with LGBT culture. Reasons can include geographic distance, unawareness of the subculture's existence, fear of social stigma, or personal preference to remain unidentified with sexuality or gender based subcultures or communities.

In some cities, especially in North America, LGBTQ people live in gay villages neighbourhoods with a high proportion of gay residents. LGBTQ communities organize a number of events to celebrate their cultures, such as Pride parades, the Gay Games and Southern Decadence.



Gay Male Culture

“Homosexuality” was the main term used until the late 1950s and early 1960s. After this point, a new “gay” culture came to be. “This new gay culture increasingly marks a full spectrum of social life: not only same-sex desires but gay selves, gay neighbors, and gay social practices that are distinctive of our affluent, postindustrial society”.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, gay culture was highly covert and relied upon secret symbols and codes woven into an overall straight context. Gay influence in early America was mostly limited to high culture. The association of gay men with opera,





ballet, professional sports, couture, fine cuisine, musical theater, the Golden Age of Hollywood, and interior design began with wealthy homosexual men using the straight themes of these media to send their own signals. In the very heterocentric Marilyn Monroe film *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, a musical number features Jane Russell singing “Anyone Here for Love” in a gym while muscled men dance around her.

The men’s costumes were designed by a man, the dance was choreographed by a man, and the dancers, as gay screenwriter Paul Rudnick points out, “seem more interested in each other than in

After the Stonewall riots in the United States in 1969, gay male culture began to be publicly acknowledged for the first time.

Russell”, but her reassuring presence gets the sequence past the censors and fits it into an overall heterocentric theme.

Some gay men formed The Violet Quill society, which focused on writing about gay experience as something central and normal in a story for the first time, rather than as a “naughty” sideline to a mostly straight story. A good example is the short story *A Boy’s Own Story* by Edmund White. In this first volume of a trilogy, White writes as a young homophilic narrator growing up under the shadow of a corrupt and remote father. The young man learns bad habits from his straight father and applies them to a gay existence.

Celebrities such as Liza Minnelli, Jane Fonda, and Bette Midler spent a significant amount of their social time with urban gay men, who were now popularly viewed as sophisticated and stylish by the jet set.

7





More celebrities themselves, such as Andy Warhol, were open about their relationships. Such openness was still limited to the largest and most progressive urban areas such as New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, Miami, Boston, Washington DC, New Orleans, and Philadelphia, however, until AIDS forced several popular celebrities out of the closet due to their contraction of what was known at first as a “gay cancer”.

Lesbian culture

As with gay men, lesbian culture includes elements both from the larger LGBT culture and elements that are specific to the lesbian community. Often thought of in this regard are elements of counterculture that have been primarily associated with lesbians in Europe, Australia/New Zealand and North America and includes large lesbian specific events such as Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival and the Club Skirts Dinah Shore Weekend.

Contemporary Lesbian culture also has its own icons such as Melissa Etheridge. Others include k.d. lang (butch), Ellen DeGeneres (androgynous), and Portia de Rossi (femme).

The history of lesbian culture over the last half-century has also been tightly entwined with the evolution of feminism. Lesbian separatism is an example of a lesbian theory and practice which identifies specifically lesbian interests and ideas and promotes a specific sort of lesbian culture.

Older stereotypes of lesbian women stressed a dichotomy





between women who adhered to stereotypical male gender stereotypes (“butch”) and stereotypical female gender stereotypes (“femme”), and that typical lesbian couples consisted of a butch/femme pairing. Today, some lesbian women adhere to being either “butch” or “femme,” but these categories are much less rigid and are now uncommon as lesbianism becomes more mainstream.



Bisexual culture

Bisexual culture emphasizes opposition to or disregard of fixed sexual and gender identity called monosexism (discrimination against bisexual, fluid, pansexual and queer-identified people), bisexual erasure, and biphobia/panphobia (hatred and/or distrust of people who do not adhere to monosexual behavior). Biphobia is common (although lessening) in both the gay and lesbian community and the straight community.

Contemporary western bisexual/pasexual and fluid culture also has its own touchstones such as the books *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out*, edited by Lani Ka’ahumanu and Loraine Hutchins, and *Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World* edited by Robyn Ochs, the British science fiction television series *Torchwood*, and icons including British singer and activist Tom Robinson, *The Black Eyed Peas* member Fergie, Scottish actor Alan Cumming and American

Many bisexual, fluid and pansexual people consider themselves to be part of the LGBT or Queer community, despite any discrimination they face.





performance artist and activist Lady Gaga.

The bisexual pride flag was designed by Michael Page in 1998 in order to give the community its own symbol comparable to the Gay pride flag of the mainstream LGBT community. The deep pink or rose stripe at the top of the flag represents the possibility of same gender attraction; the royal blue stripe at the bottom of the flag represents the possibility of different gender attraction and the stripes overlap in the central fifth of the flag to form a deep shade of lavender or purple, which represents the possibility of attraction anywhere along the entire gender spectrum.



Additionally, Celebrate Bisexuality Day has been observed on September 23 by members of the bisexual community and their allies since

Transgender Culture

The study of transgender culture as such is complicated by the many and various ways in which cultures deal with gender. For example, in many cultures, people who are attracted to people of the same sex — that is, those who in contemporary Western culture would identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual — are classed as a third gender, together with people who would in the West be classified as transgender or transsexual.

In the contemporary West, there are usually several different groups of transgender and transsexual people, some of which are extremely exclusive, like groups only for transsexual women who





explicitly want sex reassignment surgery, or male, heterosexual-only cross-dressers. Transmen's groups are often, but not always, more inclusive. Groups aiming at all transgender people, both transmen and transwomen, have in most cases appeared only in the last few years.

Some transgender or transsexual women and men however do not classify as being part of any specific "trans" culture, however there is a distinction between transgender and transsexual people who make their past known to others and those who wish to live according to their gender identity and not reveal this past, stating that they should be able to live in their true gender role in a normal way, and be in control of whom they choose to tell their past to.

Youth Culture

Youth Pride, an extension of the Gay pride and LGBT social movements, promotes equality amongst young members (usually above the age of consent) of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Questioning (LGBTIQ) community.

The movement exists in many countries and focuses mainly on festivals and parades, enabling many LGBTIQ youth to network, communicate, and celebrate their gender and sexual identities. Youth Pride organizers also point to the value in building community and supporting young people as they are more likely to get gay bashed and bullied.

Schools that have a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) handle





issues of discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ youth better than schools that do not because they help develop community and coping skills and give students a safe-space to get health and safety information. Sometimes the groups avoid labeling young people and instead let them identify themselves on their own terms “when they feel safe”.

Gay and lesbian youth bear an increased risk of suicide, substance abuse, school problems, and isolation because of a “hostile and condemning environment, verbal and physical abuse, rejection and isolation from family and peers” according to a U.S. Task Force on Youth Suicide report. Further, LGB youths are more likely to report psychological and physical abuse by parents or caretakers, and more sexual abuse. Suggested reasons for this disparity are that:

1) LGBT youths may be specifically targeted on the basis of their perceived sexual orientation or gender non-conforming appearance, and.

2) “risk factors associated with sexual minority status, including discrimination, invisibility, and rejection by family members... may lead to an increase in behaviors that are associated with risk for victimization, such as substance abuse, sex with multiple partners, or running away from home as a teenager.”

A 2008 study showed a correlation between the degree of rejecting behavior by parents of LGB adolescents and negative health problems in the teenagers studied. Crisis centers in larger cities and information sites on the Internet have arisen to help youth and adults.



Artistic Friends
Lesbian Gay
Bisexual Family Transgendered
Crazy, Funny, Quiet, Strong, Caring, Creative, Adventurous, Out-Going, Silly, Light-Hearted, English, Sarcastic, Comical, Childish, Weird, Nerky, Talkative

LGBTQ Family



Advice For Family - Coming Out LGB and T

If someone close to you comes out as lesbian, gay or bisexual, you may be unsure about how you feel about it or how to respond. It will probably take time to get used to the idea, especially if you weren't expecting it. It is important to let the person know that you still care about them, even if you don't understand it all straight away.

Regardless of your initial thoughts or feelings, remember that just because someone identifies as lesbian, gay or bisexual doesn't make them any less of a friend or family member. Think about how you felt about them before they told you and ask yourself why this would change just because they are attracted to people of the same gender or both genders.

It's also OK to ask questions, as this shows that you are taking them seriously. At the same time, try and be sensitive about how they are feeling – it's not easy coming out to someone close to you. Other sections of this booklet can help to answer some of these questions or how to ask them in a sensitive way.

It's OK to let the person know that it might take you time to get used to the idea, but that you will do your best to support them.

Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people are coming out at a younger age due to increased information and greater acceptance. If a friend or family member comes out at a young age, it can be easy to dismiss it as a phase. Most people who come out have put a lot of thought into it before telling someone, so it is important to take it seriously. Try and let the person explore their sexuality without trying to change or pressure them.



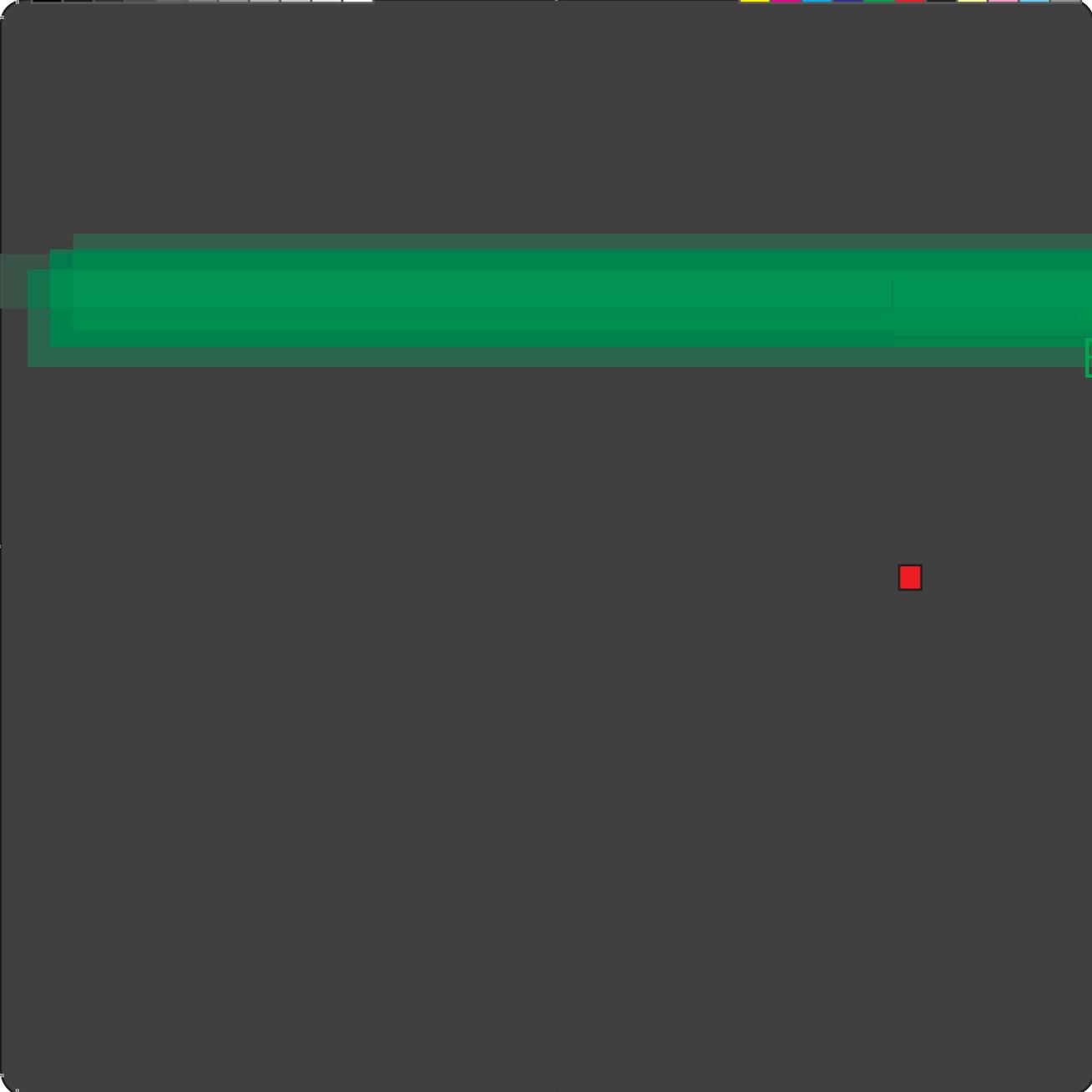














Artistic Friends Quiet Strong Caring Creative
 Lesbian Gay Transgendered
 Bisexual Family Comical
 Well-liked
 Childish
 Talkative

Lesbian





WHAT DOES 'LESBIAN' MEAN?

The word lesbian describes a girl or woman who is attracted, both sexually and emotionally to other girls or women.

It is normal to question your sexuality and part of growing up is discovering and learning about yourself. It is also normal to have feelings towards other women and to be attracted to other women.

AM I OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW?

Everyone is different and there is no right or wrong age to realise you are a lesbian. Sexuality can be fluid and you may be attracted to different people at different times in your life.

Young people are often told that they don't know themselves well enough or should wait until they are older before they decide. Many young women say they have known for a long time that they feel 'different' to other women and they are aware of their attraction to other women at a young age. It's okay to feel like this and it is okay to change your mind. Sexuality does not need to be fixed forever – for some people it will be, and for others it might shift over time.





WHAT DO LESBIAN'S LOOKS LIKE?

Myths and stereotypes about lesbians can lead people to believe that all women who identify as lesbian must look and act masculine (often referred to as butch). Lesbians are as varied and different as straight people, some may be butch but others may be very feminine. Being a lesbian is not a way of life, it is a part of life.

Straight people are not defined just by who they are attracted to, so there is no reason why you should be. Stereotypes don't really define any individual; we are much too diverse for that! You can be exactly the person you want to be and should never feel pressure to act or look a certain way.

IS IT NORMAL?

There are still some messages out there that make us believe that it is not okay or normal for a girl or woman to fancy another girl or woman. Some societies and communities do not accept this difference. It is completely normal to have feelings for other girls or women and we can offer support and advice to help you feel more comfortable about who you are.







Friends
 Lesbian
 Family
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 Gay
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 Nerdy
 Sassy
 Quiet
 Strong
 Caring
 Ambitious
 Sassy
 Funny
 Playful
 Outhouse
 English
 Can-Mix-It-Up

Gay





WHAT DOES 'GAY' MEAN?

The word gay is often used to describe a guy who is attracted, both sexually and emotionally to other guys. It can also be used to describe lesbian women, however in this section we will use the word gay to talk about guys.

It is normal to question your sexuality and part of growing up is discovering and learning about yourself. It is also normal to have feelings towards other boys or men and to be attracted to other boys or men.

AM I OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW?

Everyone is different and there is no right or wrong age to realise you are gay. Sexuality can be fluid and you may be attracted to different people at different times in your life.

Young people are often told that they don't know themselves well enough or should wait until they are older before they decide. Many young men say they have known for a long time that they feel 'different' to other boys or men and they are aware of their attraction to other boys or men at a young age. It's okay to feel like this and it is okay to change your mind. Sexuality does not need to be fixed forever – for some people it will be, and for others it might shift over time.





WHAT DO GAY MEN LOOK LIKE?

Myths and stereotypes about gay men can lead people to believe that all men who identify as gay must look and act feminine (often referred to as camp). Gay men are as varied and different as straight people, some may be camp but others may be very masculine or butch. Being a gay man is not a way of life, it is a part of life. Straight people are not defined just by who they are attracted to, so there is no reason why you should be. Stereotypes don't really define any individual; we are much too diverse for that! You can be exactly the person you want to be and should never feel pressure to act or look a certain way.

IS IT NORMAL?

There are still some messages out there that make us believe that it is not okay or normal for a guy to fancy another guy. Some societies and communities do not accept this difference. It is completely normal to have feelings for other guys and we can offer support and advice to help you feel more comfortable about who you are.







Artistic Friends Happy Quiet Strong Caring Creative Adventurous
 Ambitious Sad Gay Silly Light-Hearted Out-Going
 Foolish
 Inquisitive Well-Read Family Sarcastic Gen-Minded
 Childish Talkative Comical
 Bisexual

Bisexual





WHAT DOES 'BISEXUAL' MEAN?

The word bisexual describes a person who is attracted to both men and women.

It is normal to question your sexuality and part of growing up is discovering and learning about yourself. It is also normal to have feelings towards other people, both men and women.

AM I OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW?

Everyone is different and there is no right or wrong age to realise you are bisexual. Sexuality can be fluid and you may be attracted to different people at different times in your life.

Young people are often told that they don't know themselves well enough or should wait until they are older before they decide. Many young men say they have known for a long time that they feel 'different' to others and they are aware of their attraction to both men and women at a young age. It's okay to feel like this and it is okay to change your mind. Sexuality does not need to be fixed forever – for some people it will be, and for others it might shift over time.





WHAT DO BISEXUAL PEOPLE LOOK LIKE?

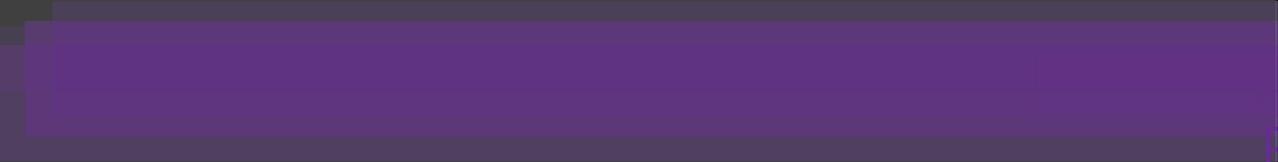
There is often a myth that bisexual people are either lesbian or gay men who have not yet decided. This is untrue and bisexual people have the right to be attracted to both men and women without needing to choose one. Straight people are not defined just by who they are attracted to, so there is no reason why you should be.

Stereotypes don't really define any individual; we are much too diverse for that! You can be exactly the person you want to be and should never feel pressure to act or look a certain way.

IS IT NORMAL?

There are still some messages out there that make us believe that it is not okay or normal to be attracted to both men and women. Some societies and communities do not accept this difference. It is completely normal to have feelings for both men and women and we can offer support and advice to help you feel more comfortable about who you are.







Transgendered?

Some of the things that you might experience as a transgender person are similar to those that people coming to terms with being LGB may face, including:

- Feelings of shame and fear and internalised homophobia and transphobia.
- Fear of disclosure and coming out to people.
- You may experience social pressures to conform.
- You may be worried about relationships, either losing current relationships or about future relationships.

Possible Issues For Transsexuals.

- Legal issues like re-registering sex e.g. on your birth certificate.
- Medical issues like hormone therapy and gender-reassignment surgery.
- Social issues like coming out to family, friends and partners, transitioning and “passing”.
- Transphobia: the unrealistic or irrational fear and hatred of transgender people.

This includes verbal or physical violence, discrimination, harassment, or refusing to call someone by their preferred pronoun e.g. he or she. Like homophobia, transphobia is based on stereotyping and misconceptions. Sadly, anyone outside society's view of the “norm” could be a target, regardless of sexual or gender identity.





Why LGB and T

Transgender is an umbrella term that we use to describe someone who does not conform to society's view of being male or female.

Most people understand that gender identity (see below for a definition) and sexual orientation (who you are attracted to) are separate parts of what makes up a person. Why do LGBT organisations work with both?

- Many transgender people are lesbian, gay or bisexual
- Many lesbian, gay or bisexual people are transgender

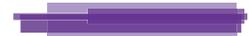
Lesbian, gay and bisexual people frequently challenge gender boundaries in their social and often sexual behaviour and are often victims of hate crimes because of their gender presentation. Transgender people have always been present in the LGB community. Drag, butch-femme culture and androgyny are all features of transgender influence.

Transgender people have played important roles in campaigning for LGBT rights over many years.

Definitions

Sex: refers to someone's biological identity as a male or female – characterised by having male or female genitalia.

Gender: features of maleness or femaleness expressed through personal characteristics – society plays a large part in defining “acceptable” male and female roles, though many of us feel that we don't fit fully into either of these definitions. A personal feeling of maleness, femaleness, or being somewhere in between is known as Gender Identity.





Transgender: an umbrella term that we use to describe someone who does not conform to society's view of being male or female. It includes a variety of gender identities and expressions, some of which are explained below.

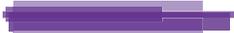
Transsexual: a medical term used to describe people whose gender and biological sex are different, for example someone whose biological sex is female, but they identify as male gender. Transsexual people often seek medical treatment to align their biological sex with their true gender.

- **MTF: male to female transsexual person.**
- **FTM: female to male transsexual person.**

Intersex: people born with chromosomal abnormalities or ambiguous genitalia (for example they may have an external penis, but internal female reproductive organs such as ovaries). At birth, doctors and parents often decide whether the infant should be male or female and then they get surgery to assign them this gender. They may develop issues with their gender identity as they grow up.

Other transgender identities include:

- Drag queens.
 - Drag kings.
 - Gender benders and gender blenders.
 - Cross-dresser.
 - Androgyny – having both masculine and feminine characteristics, or also describes being neither male nor female.
 - Anyone else who identifies as transgender.
- Most of this information has been sourced from the Beyond Barriers Transgender leaflet.





Another great resource is the Gender Identity information booklet which has more details about medical transition options, gender recognition and information for friends and family of transgender people.

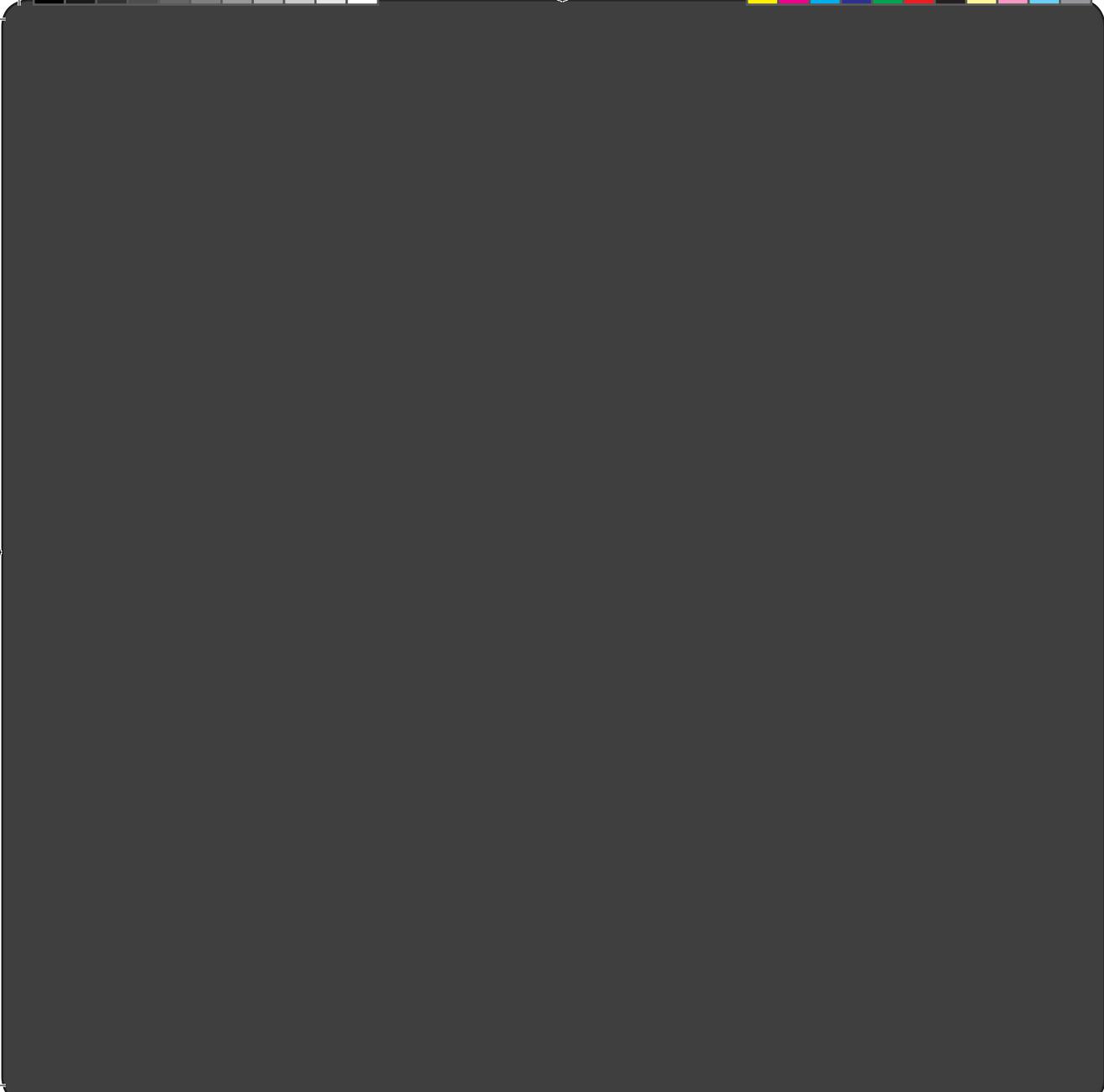
Gender Recognition

Transsexuals can now get a birth certificate showing their true gender. The Gender Recognition Act 2004 allows transsexual people to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate. The GR certificate enables you to have a new birth certificate issued showing your true gender (also referred to as 'acquired gender') rather than your gender as assigned at birth.

For you to be eligible to apply you must:

- Intend to live in your true gender permanently.
- Be 18 years old or over.
- Have been diagnosed as gender dysphoric by a gender specialist, though there is no requirement for you to have undergone gender confirmation surgery (also referred to as 'gender reassignment surgery').
- Have permanently lived in your true gender for at least two years (this period is also referred to as 'Real Life Experience' or RLE).







Facts and myths





When people don't know much about a subject or group of people, they tend to make assumptions and jump to all sorts of conclusions without finding out the truth. This leads to a lot of common myths forming. LGBT people are still hugely under-represented in the media and information about being LGBT can still be hard to find. Below is a list of some of the myths surrounding LGBT people.

Myth: Being lesbian, gay or bisexual is just a phase.

Fact: Lots of people do experiment with their sexuality, but for lesbian, gay and bisexual people, being attracted to the same gender or both genders all their life is no different to straight people being attracted to the opposite sex.

Myth: Being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice/lifestyle.

Fact: People do not choose who they are attracted to, whether they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or straight.

Myth: Lesbian, gay and bisexual people can be cured.

Fact: There is no valid scientific evidence that shows a person's sexual orientation can be changed, but many experts have warned that trying to do so can be extremely damaging.

Myth: Being lesbian, gay or bisexual is unnatural.

Fact: There is nothing unnatural about being attracted to or loving someone regardless of their gender.

Myth: Being lesbian, gay or bisexual means you can't be religious.

Fact: Although some religions/ faiths still condemn being lesbian, gay or bisexual, lots of LGBT people are religious or follow the teachings of a religion.





Myth: Bisexual people are just confused.

Fact: Many people are attracted to both men & women all their lives and don't feel any more confused over their sexual orientation than anyone else.

Myth: Bisexual people are greedy.

Fact: Being attracted to both genders doesn't make a person greedy, it's no different from being attracted to one.

Myth: Bisexual people are just gay or lesbian people who haven't admitted it yet.

Fact: Some gay and lesbian people will identify as bisexual first as part of the coming out process but many people happily identify as bisexual all their life.

Myth: It's fashionable to be bi.

Fact: Some people may think its cool/fashionable to be bisexual, but this type of attitude can prevent people who are genuinely bisexual from being taken seriously. This links back to ideas of sexual orientation being a choice or a lifestyle that can be changed.

Myth: Lesbians/gay men fancy every woman/man they see.

Fact: Some lesbians/gay men will be attracted to lots of women/men and some just a few; most will be somewhere in the middle. Your sexual orientation has no direct relation to how many or how few people you are attracted to and is no different to heterosexual people's attraction to people of the opposite gender.





Myth: Lesbians/gay men are promiscuous and will try and jump into bed with every woman/man they meet.

Fact: Again, a person's sexual orientation has nothing to do with how many or how few partners a person will have.

Myth: All lesbians are butch/All gay men are camp.

Fact: Gay, lesbian and bisexual people are as varied as straight people. Some lesbians will be butch and some won't. Some gay men will be camp and some won't. You should never feel pressure to act a certain way or change how you behave just because of your sexual orientation.

Myths & Facts

Myth: All people who are transgender need to undergo surgery.

Fact: Being transgender means different things to different people- everyone's journey is different.

Myth: Trans people are gay.

Fact: Being trans is about gender not sexuality – trans people can be gay, straight or bi.

Myth: You only get trans women, you don't get trans men.

Fact: There are lots of trans men but currently, trans women have received more media attention.

Myth: Transgender identities are immoral.

Fact: Many trans people have faith and there are a growing number of trans friendly places of worship.





Myth: Surgery/hormones will mean your body will change overnight.

Fact: Everybody's body changes differently and at different paces. There's no set timeline.

Myth: All trans people stick out like sore thumbs.

Fact: Everybody is different whether they are trans or not.

Myth: If you are a cross-dresser or gender queer you want to change gender.

Fact: Not all trans people want to change their gender; it's about the person being happy and doing what makes them feel comfortable.

Myth: All trans people are confused.

Fact: Trans people are no more confused or no less confused than anyone else.

Myth: Being transgender is a choice.

Fact: Being trans is no more a choice than being tall, straight or black. Trans people however have to choose how honest they are with themselves and others.

Myth: All trans people are depressed and unhappy.

Fact: Many trans people live happy, successful and fulfilled lives.

Myth: If you are transsexual and haven't had surgery you shouldn't want to have sex.

Fact: Some transsexual people will still have sexual feelings and still want to have sex – it's whatever feels right for you.







What Do I Do If A Young Person Comes Out To Me?

Every instance of this is likely to be different but there are a few key points to remember:

- Openness and non-judgmental responses.
- Ensuring that you don't panic – in the majority of cases young people will simply want someone to tell.
- Honesty about what you do and do not know – if there are questions that you can't answer then promise to get back to the young person with the answer later.
- Remembering that you could be the first person ever to be told about this and having a young person confide in you is a huge privilege.
- Reinforcing the idea that being LGBT is completely normal and nothing to be ashamed of.
- Reassuring them of confidentiality and that you do not need to share information with anyone else unless you believe that they are at risk of harm.
- Readiness to provide relevant and up-to-date information and resources.

Exploring the young person's disclosure with open questions can help them open up and also allow you to find out what they need from you.





What is Coming Out LGB?

Coming out is when someone tells someone else their sexual orientation. Most of us are brought up to think that everyone is attracted to the opposite sex. For people who this is the case, they very rarely need to come out, as who they are attracted to matches what is seen as normal. These people may not even consider themselves to have a sexual orientation because it's not labelled as different.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people, however, have to make the choice to either publicly hide how they feel or tell people they are attracted to people of the same gender or both genders. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people come out at all stages of their life and to varying degrees. For some it will be essential for them to live fully as themselves, whereas for others it might be that they only come out to themselves.

The following sections in this guide will look at all the different stages of the coming out process in more detail. Just remember that coming out is your choice and you should never feel forced to tell people if you don't feel ready. Coming out can be a lifelong process and only you can know when, where and who to tell.





Coming Out to Friends

Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people come out because they reach a point where they don't want to hide who they are anymore. Telling friends can provide extra support and can make relationships feel more honest and real. Some friends may not accept it, but real friends will accept you for who you are. Before coming out to a friend, have a think about the following:

- Decide who you want to tell
- Decide who you can trust not to tell others (unless you want them to).
- It is important when telling a friend to explain that it is your choice to tell others in your own time.
- Be prepared for questions and to explain how you feel.
- Make sure you are in a safe, neutral space.
- Be confident about your decision and don't let others try and talk you out of it.
- Remind them that who you are attracted to is only one part of you and that you are still the same person.
- Explain that your friendship doesn't necessarily have to change.

Coming out may change some friendships, sometimes you might end up being closer, but sometimes people might become awkward around you. The important thing is to explain you are still the same person. If they don't accept it be patient and give them some space, as they may need time to get used to it.





Coming Out to Family

Telling family members can feel especially daunting because they have known you your whole life. The news may come as a surprise and they may think that they are somehow to blame. It's important to help them understand that this is a part of you that no-one can change.

- Think about what family member to tell first; who you think might be most supportive.
- Some parents or carers, may blame themselves, or think that they did something wrong. Try and reassure them that this is a part of you that no-one can change, and that it has nothing to do with them getting it wrong.
- If they are worried about you not having children, explain there are many options if you want to be a parent.
- Be ready to have a conversation about it with them and be ready to answer questions.
- Remember that the first reactions you get from family members may not be a true representation of how they'll feel in the long term.
- Many parents, with time, can become your biggest advocate.





Coming Out at School

Some lesbian, gay and bisexual people will go through school without telling anyone their sexual orientation, but some may decide to come out at school. For others being outed or being presumed to be lesbian, gay or bisexual will also be a reality.

Some things to consider are:

- Speaking to your guidance teacher or the head teacher to discuss how the school will support you.
- Ask for a copy of the school's anti-bullying policy to see if it mentions homophobia.
- Get further advice from LGBT youth groups or online resources.
- If your friends will support you to come out at school.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every person under the age of 18 should have the right to education, the right to be kept safe from harm, and the right to have a say in the decisions affecting their own life. It is your school's responsibility to make sure that you are safe from bullying and discrimination, but if your school are failing to support you properly, you may want to report it to the police.





Coming Out at College/Uni

A lot of lesbian, gay and bisexual people see going to college or university as an opportunity to live more openly and be more public about their sexual orientation. Of course people's experiences vary greatly depending upon where they study, what subjects they pick and their classmates.

Before enrolling for a course at a college or university, it might be useful to consider the following:

- Check if they have an LGBT society.
- Read the college/university's mission statement to see if it mentions equality and diversity
- Ask for a copy of the college/university's anti-bullying policy

All colleges and universities are required by law to deal with any discrimination you face as a lesbian, gay or bisexual student, but for them to deal with it you must report it. This is not always easy to do, so perhaps ask a friend to come with you for support.





Support & Advice

Once you have come out to yourself, you might want to tell people close to you straight away, but for many people this takes time. Before telling friends and family there are a number of ways you can get support to make this easier. Below are a few ideas.

1. Websites

There are now a number of websites for LGBT people that offer information and advice. See Page **

2. Online Forums

If you don't feel ready to talk to other people face to face, there are a number of online forums where you can talk to other lesbian, gay and bisexual people. This can be a safe and anonymous way to find out more and discuss how you are feeling. See Page**

3. Support Groups

There are a number of youth groups where you can meet other lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people in a safe and confidential environment. For a list of LGBT youth groups in see: Page **

Things to Think About

Coming out to others can be a hugely liberating experience and many people say it feels like a huge weight has been lifted from them. Below is a list of some of these benefits as well as some things to consider.





Benefits

- Being yourself
- Unloading the burden
- Living as you want to live
- Meeting other lesbian, gay and bisexual people
- Helping/supporting other lesbian, gay and bisexual people
- Gradually feeling at ease with yourself
- Educating others/breaking down stereotypes/myths
- Being a positive role model for others

Considerations

- Homophobia
- Safety
- Negative reactions
- Being rejected
- People not taking it seriously
- Some people might treat you differently
- People not listening/understanding (ignorance)
- People trying to talk you out of it

Coming out rarely is all good or all bad, but if you do have a negative experience, remember that by coming out you will have increased opportunities to meet other LGBT people, make new friends, and receive support from others.





Coming Out Step by Step

Telling someone that you are close to can be the hardest part of coming out, so it's important to be prepared. There's never really a proper time or place and you'll probably never feel 100% ready, but this step by step guide will help you to have all bases covered.

Be sure you are ready to tell:

- Be confident in yourself.
- Be sure that you want to come out rather than feeling you have to.

Be informed yourself – be prepared to answer questions:

- Educate yourself on the topic so you can educate others.
- If you are well informed you're more likely to be taken seriously.

Get support

- See the Support & Advice section, page **.



Think about who, where, when:

- Be sure about whom you want to tell and that they are someone you trust.
- Do it somewhere neutral and safe (somewhere neither of you know others).
- Make sure there is plenty of time to talk.

Decide how you are going to word it:

- Don't be too scripted or formal.
- Don't provide too much information at once.
- Try and be calm.
- Be non-confrontational.

Be ready for reactions:

- Be prepared for any reaction.
- Remember that this might be the first time they have thought of you this way/met an out lesbian, gay or bisexual person.
- Their first reaction might not be how they actually feel.
- Give people a chance to think and time to get used to it.

Remember that it probably took time for you to come to terms with it.





What is Coming Out Transgender?

Coming Out is when someone tells someone else their gender identity or sexual orientation. Most of us are brought up to think that everyone's gender identity matches their physical body and that everyone is attracted to the opposite sex. For people who this is the case, they very rarely need to come out, as who they are and who they are attracted to matches what is seen as normal. These people may not even consider themselves to have a gender identity or sexual orientation because it's not labelled as different.

Trans people, however, have to make the choice to either publicly 'hide' how they feel or tell people their true gender identity. Trans people come out at all stages of their life and to varying degrees. For some it will be essential for them to live fully as themselves, whereas for others it might be that they only come out to themselves.

The following sections in this guide will look at all the different stages of the coming out process in more detail. Just remember that coming out is your choice and you should never feel forced to tell people if you don't feel ready. Coming out can be a lifelong process and only you can know when, where and who to tell.

Coming Out to Yourself

Before you can come out to anyone else, it's important to come out to yourself. This is when you acknowledge your own gender identity and decide how you want to express it. Coming out to yourself gives you the opportunity to explore exactly who you want to be. It might be useful to do some research into different transgender





identities, but what's important at this stage is being honest with yourself and taking time to discover how you really feel.

Becoming or expressing who you really want to be might seem impossible or hugely daunting at this stage, but that doesn't mean you won't get there. Many trans people have felt like this, but with the right information, advice and support they have achieved what they once thought they would never be able to do. When coming out to yourself the following suggestions might be useful:

1. How do you want to express your gender identity?

Look over all the categories within the trans umbrella and think about which one seems the closest to how you feel. Think about what is involved in achieving this and how you feel about the process.

2. Experiment with the idea.

Some people dress up or experiment with different personas while in a private, safe space to see what feels right. This could involve changing your voice, how you walk, or putting on different clothes.

Support & Advice

Once you have come out to yourself, you might want to tell people close to you straight away, but for many people this takes time. Before telling friends and family there are a number of ways you can get support to make this easier. Below are a few ideas. For further advice see Useful Links.

1. Speak to your GP

They can put you in touch with a Gender Specialist who will be able to discuss your options in more detail.





2. Websites

There are now a number of websites for trans people that offer information and advice (see Websites on page 40).

3. Online Forums

If you don't feel ready to talk to other people face to face, there are a number of online forums where you can talk to other trans people. This can be a safe and anonymous way to find out more and discuss how you are feeling.

4. Support Groups

There are a number of trans support groups where you can meet other trans people in a safe and confidential environment.

Things to Think About

Coming out to others can be a hugely liberating experience and many people say it feels like a huge weight has been lifted from them. Below is a list of some of these benefits as well as some things to consider.

Benefits

- Being more true to yourself
- Unloading the burden
- Living as you want to live
- Meeting other like minded people
- Helping/supporting other trans people
- Gradually feeling at ease with yourself
- Educating others/breaking down stereotypes/myths
- Being a positive role model for others





Considerations

- Transphobia
- Safety
- Negative Reactions
- Being rejected/ostracised
- People not listening/understanding (ignorance)
- People trying to talk you out of it/change your mind (scaremongering)
- It is a lengthy process (be patient)
- Be realistic about what you will achieve through HRT and surgery
- It's a life changing decision

Coming out rarely is all good or all bad, but if you do have a negative experience, remember that by coming out you will have increased opportunities to meet other trans people, make new friends, and receive support from others.

Coming Out Step by Step

Telling someone that you are close to can be the hardest part of coming out, so it's important to be prepared. This step by step guide will help you to have all bases covered.

Be sure you are ready to tell:

- Be confident in yourself.
- Be sure that you want to come out rather than feeling you have to.





Be informed yourself – be prepared to answer questions:

- Educate yourself on the topic so you can educate others.
- If you are well informed you're more likely to be taken seriously.

Get support

- See the Support & Advice section, page 8.

Think about who, where, when:

- Be sure about who you want to tell and that they are someone you trust.
- Do it somewhere neutral and safe, somewhere neither of you know others.
- Make sure there is plenty of time to talk.

Decide how you are going to word it:

- Don't be too scripted or formal.
- Don't provide too much information at once.
- Try and be calm.
- Be non-confrontational.

Be ready for reactions:

- Be prepared for any reaction, see Questions & Responses, page 12.
- Remember that this might be the first time they have thought of you this way/met any trans person.

Their first reaction might not be how they actually feel:

- Give people a chance to think and time to get used to it.

Remember that it probably took time for you to come to terms with it.





Transgendered Coming Out to Friends

Many trans people come out because they reach a point where they don't want to hide who they are anymore. Telling friends can provide extra support and can make relationships feel more honest and real. Some friends may not accept it, but real friends will accept you for who you are.

Before coming out to a friend, have a think about the following:

- Decide who you want to tell.
- Decide who you can trust not to tell others, unless you want them to.
- It is important when telling a friend to explain that it is your choice to tell others in your own time.
- Be prepared for questions and to explain your decision.
- Make sure you are in a safe, neutral space.
- Be confident about your decision and don't let others try and talk you out of it.
- Remind them that your gender is only one part of you and that you are still the same person.
- Explain that your friendship doesn't necessarily have to change.





Transgendered Coming Out to Family

Telling family members can feel especially daunting because they have known you as the gender you were assigned at birth for longer than most- maybe your whole life. The news may come as a complete shock and they may think that they are somehow to blame.

It's important to help them understand that this is a part of you that no-one can change, and that by transitioning (in whatever form), you will become the person you really want to be.

- Remember that this might be the first time they have thought of you this way.
- A lot of parents may think that they have done something wrong and blame themselves.
- Some parents may feel like they have 'lost' a son or daughter and will need time to accept your new gender.
- Remember that the first reactions you get from family members may not be a true representation of how they'll feel in the long term.
- Many parents, with time, can become your biggest advocate, actively supporting you through your transition.

“ When Simon told me he was changing his gender, I was a little taken aback, but I listened to what he had to say and was happy that he had found contentment in himself”

Grandparent of a trans man

“ At first I was upset and felt that my son had died and in a way was grieving, and then eventually, I watched my daughter grow into a confident and beautiful young woman. I love my daughter and wouldn't have her any other way”

Mother of a trans woman





Coming Out to Partners

All relationships can be challenging for a number of reasons, regardless of your gender identity or sexuality. The fear that telling a new or existing partner that you have identified or do identify as transgender, or would like to transition will end a relationship often makes trans people reluctant to come out to their partner.

Although some partners may not be able to continue a relationship with someone who changes their gender, many relationships will continue through a transition. Your partner will probably need time to think about how they feel, so try and be patient.

If you have already transitioned and meet someone new it's important to think about what stage in the relationship would be a good time to tell them, if that is what you want to do. It's also important to consider if you don't tell them and they find out later on, how they might feel.

It's important to remember that even if an existing relationship doesn't work out, this doesn't mean you won't meet someone else. Trans people, like everyone else, can have long, happy relationships.

“ I have never identified as a trans woman and have only ever seen myself as a woman. I began transitioning when I was seventeen and have lived successfully up until now as a woman. I have been on hormones for nearly eight years and undergone breast surgery. I have no plans to undergo the full operation as I don't want to risk complications, and generally feel happy as I am now. I have a very supportive partner and family”.

27 year old woman





Coming Out at School

Some trans young people may want to start transitioning when they are still at school. This decision should be thought about carefully, as it could have a huge impact on your experience at school.

Some things to consider are:

- Speaking to your guidance teacher or the head teacher to discuss how the school will support you.
- Ask for a copy of the school's anti-bullying policy to see if it mentions transphobia.
- Get further advice from transgender support groups or online resources.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every person under the age of 18 should have the right to education, the right to be kept safe from harm, and the right to have a say in the decisions affecting one's own life. It is your school's responsibility to make sure that you are safe from bullying and discrimination, but if your school are failing to support you properly, you may want to report it to the police.

A useful guide for schools to support transgender students has been produced by GIRES and can be downloaded from:
www.gires.org.uk/assets/Schools/TransphobicBullying.pdf





Coming Out at College/Uni

Transgender people's experiences of studying at college or university can vary widely and although anti-discrimination legislation exists, sadly not all colleges and universities are proactive in implementing it. Before enrolling for a course at a college or university, it might be useful to consider the following:

- Check if they have an LGBT society.
- Read the college/university's mission statement to see if it mentions equality and diversity.
- Ask for a copy of the college/university's anti-bullying policy.
- Contact the college by phone or email to state your interest in enrolling on a course and ask them if they have experience of working with trans students.

All colleges and universities are required by law to deal with any discrimination you face as a trans student, but for them to deal with it you must report it. This is not always easy to do, so perhaps ask a friend to come with you for support.

Guidance for colleges and universities to support trans students has been developed by the Forum on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Post-School Education and can be downloaded at: www.scottishtrans.org/uploads/resources/a7002.pdf.





Coming Out at Work

Most trans people are not out at work despite legislation protecting transsexual people from employment discrimination being in place since 1999. It is also still common for transsexual people to change job at the time of transition to avoid being outed at work. Other transgender people often go to significant lengths in order to reduce the chance of their colleagues and employers finding out they are transgender.

Some people do transition and remain in the same job and are supported by their work, but it is worth taking time to consider this decision. For more information see Rights & Legislation.

A useful guide for employers on supporting transgender employees has been produced by the Scottish Transgender Alliance and Stonewall Scotland, and can be downloaded at:

www.scottishtrans.org/uploads/resources/changing_for_the_better.pdf

Reporting a Hate Crime

The law changed in 2009 to further protect all transgender people from hate crime. This means that if you are the victim of a crime which was motivated by transphobia, such as being physically harmed while transphobic comments are made, you can report it to the police.

The police have been encouraging reporting of this type of crime and take it very seriously. You can contact the police on 999 in an emergency, or if you don't report it at the time but decide to later, you can do so by contacting your local police station. If for whatever reason you are unsure about going to the police, then you can make a 'remote report' (sometimes called 3rd party reporting) via a local support agency who are linked into the police. LGBT Youth Scotland is one of these agencies, with remote reporting available at all its local services. For Emergency Numbers please see page **





Transphobia & Bullying

Sadly, many transgender people still experience transphobia and/or bullying at some stage in their life, whether it is at school, college, university, work or in the street. Transphobia is physical or verbal abuse to someone because they are or are assumed to be transgender.

Transphobia or bullying can include name calling, being threatened, being hit or kicked, being made fun of, being ignored, or having rumours spread about you. No person deserves to be bullied or to be the victim of transphobia – it is never acceptable.

If you are being bullied or discriminated against because you are transgender, you might want to:

- Talk to someone you trust about it.
- Report it to your school/college/university/employer.
- Report it to the police.
- Get support from a trans or LGBT group.
- Contact victim support if you have been the victim of a hate crime at www.victimsupportsc.org.uk.

Challenging the bullying behaviour on your own is never a good idea, as you might be putting yourself in danger. For more information on bullying, visit: www.respectme.org.uk.







People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) are members of every community. They are diverse, come from all walks of life, and include people of all races and ethnicities, all ages, all socioeconomic statuses, and from all parts of the country. The perspectives and needs of LGBT people should be routinely considered in public health efforts to improve the overall health of every person and eliminate health disparities.

In addition to considering the needs of LGBT people in programs designed to improve the health of entire communities, there is also a need for culturally competent medical care and prevention services that are specific to this population. Social inequality is often associated with poorer health status, and sexual orientation has been associated with multiple health threats. Members of the LGBT community are at increased risk for a number of health threats when compared to their heterosexual peers. Differences in sexual behavior account for some of these disparities, but others are associated with social and structural inequities, such as the stigma and discrimination that LGBT populations experience.

These pages provide information and resources on some of the health issues and inequities affecting LGBT communities. Links to other information sources and resources are also provided. Some of this information is designed for members of the general public. Other information has been developed for health care providers, public health professionals, and public health students.

Male Gay Health

Consistent and Correct Use of Condoms

To achieve maximum protection by using condoms, they must





be used consistently and correctly.

The failure of condoms to protect against STD/HIV transmission usually results from inconsistent or incorrect use, rather than product failure.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) have been increasing among gay and bisexual men. Recent increases in syphilis cases have been documented across the country. In 2008, men who have sex with men (MSM) accounted for 63% of primary and secondary syphilis cases in the United States. MSM often are diagnosed with other bacterial STDs, including chlamydia and gonorrhea infections.

Gay and bisexual men can be infected with HPV (Human Papillomavirus), the most common STD in the United States. Some types of HPV cause genital and anal warts and some can lead to the development of anal and oral cancer. Men who have sex with men are 17 times more likely to develop anal cancer than heterosexual men. Men who are HIV-positive are even more likely than those who are uninfected to develop anal cancer. See *Primary and Secondary Syphilis—Reported Cases, 2008, by Sexual Orientation*.

How are STDs spread?

Gonorrhea and chlamydia are sexually transmitted by genital secretions, such as urethral secretions from the penis.

Genital herpes and syphilis are transmitted primarily through skin-to-skin contact with sores/ulcers or infected skin that looks normal.

HPV is transmitted through contact with infected genital skin or mucosal surfaces/secretions, such as the penis and anus.





What are the signs and symptoms of STDs?

Some STDs do not cause any symptoms, while others can cause various symptoms, including:

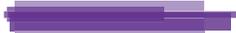
- A discharge from your penis.
- Pain, burning, or itching around the opening of your penis when you urinate.
- Anal itching, soreness, and bleeding, or discharge.
- A single sore or multiple sores on the penis.
- Rash on the palms of the hands or bottom of feet.
- Painful blisters around the genitals or anus.
- Warts on the genital area, including the penis and scrotum.

General LGBT Health

When should I be tested?

All gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered other MSM should be tested each year for STDs (including HIV). Always see a doctor if you have any signs and symptoms of an STD. It is important to get tested so you can get the needed medications to cure the infection or alleviate its symptoms. Be sure to tell your recent sex partners, so they can get tested too. Talk openly and honestly with your partner about STDs. It is also essential that you avoid having sex until you and your partner have both finished your treatment, so you don't re-infect each other.

How can I prevent STDs?





The most reliable ways to avoid transmission of STDs are to abstain from sexual activity, or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner. Consistent and correct use of male latex condoms reduces the risk of STD transmission. However, condom use cannot provide absolute protection against any STD. There is also a vaccine available to prevent HPV in females and males.

Can STDs Be Treated?

Antibiotics can successfully cure bacterial STDs, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis. However, drug-resistant strains of gonorrhea are increasing in many areas of the world, including the United States, and successful treatment of gonorrhea is becoming more difficult.

There is no treatment that can cure viral STDs, such as HPV and genital herpes. Antiviral medications can shorten and prevent herpes outbreaks during the period of time the person takes the medication. In addition, daily suppressive therapy for symptomatic herpes can reduce transmission to partners. Visible warts caused by HPV can be treated and removed.

Youth

Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth are happy and thrive during their adolescent years. Going to a school that creates a safe and supportive learning environment for all students and having caring and accepting parents are especially important. This helps all youth achieve good grades and maintain good mental and physical health. However, some LGBT youth are more likely than their heterosexual peers to experience difficulties in their lives and school environments, such as violence.

Experiences with Violence





Negative attitudes toward gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people put LGBT youth at increased risk for experiences with violence, compared with other students. Violence can include behaviors such as bullying, teasing, harassment, physical assault, and suicide-related behaviors.

How CDC Promotes Health Safety Among Youth – Read
LGBTQ Youth Programs-At-A-Glance

A 2009 survey of more than 7,000 LGBT middle and high school students aged 13–21 years found that in the past year, because of their sexual orientation—

Eight of ten students had been verbally harassed at school;

Four of ten had been physically harassed at school;

Six of ten felt unsafe at school; and

One of five had been the victim of a physical assault at school.

Bullying and LGBT Youth

LGBT youth are also at increased risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors, suicide attempts, and suicide. A nationally representative study of adolescents in grades 7–12 found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth were more than twice as likely to have attempted suicide as their heterosexual peers. More studies are needed to better understand the risks for suicide among transgender youth.

Another survey of more than 7,000 seventh- and eighth-grade students from a large Midwestern county examined the effects of school climate and homophobic bullying on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning (LGBQ) youth and found that LGBQ youth were more likely than heterosexual youth to report high levels of bullying and





substance use; Students who were questioning their sexual orientation reported more bullying, homophobic victimization, unexcused absences from school, drug use, feelings of depression, and suicidal behaviors than either heterosexual or LGB students; LGB students who did not experience homophobic teasing reported the lowest levels of depression and suicidal feelings of all student groups (heterosexual, LGB, and questioning students); and all students, regardless of sexual orientation, reported the lowest levels of depression, suicidal feelings, alcohol and marijuana use, and unexcused absences from school when they were in a positive school climate and Not experiencing homophobic teasing.

More resources for LGBT youth and their friends - www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm#friends

Effects on Education and Health

Exposure to violence can have negative effects on the education and health of LGBT youth. In a national study of middle and high school students, LGBT students (61.1%) were more likely than their non-LGBT peers to feel unsafe or uncomfortable as a result of their sexual orientation. LGBT students (over 25%) reported missing classes or days of school because of feeling unsafe in their school environment.

Overall, the stresses experienced by LGBT youth also put them at greater risk for mental health problems, substance use, and physical health problems.

What Schools Can Do?

For youth to thrive in their schools and communities, they need to





feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe and supported. A positive school climate has been associated with decreased depression, suicidal feelings, substance use, and unexcused school absences among LGBT students.

School personnel, leaders of community organizations, parents, and youth have a role to play in building positive, supportive, and healthy environments for youth. Such environments promote acceptance and respect and help youth feel valued. Schools can assist by implementing clear policies, procedures, and activities designed to prevent violence. For example, a study found that, in schools with LGB support groups (such as gay-straight alliances), LGB students were less likely to experience threats of violence, miss school because they felt unsafe, or attempt suicide than those students in schools without LGB support groups.

To help promote health and safety among LGBTQ youth, schools can implement the following policies and practices:

- Encourage respect for all students and prohibit bullying, harassment, and violence against all students.
- Identify “safe spaces,” such as counselors’ offices, designated classrooms, or student organizations, where LGBTQ youth can receive support from administrators, teachers, or other school staff.
- Encourage student-led and student-organized school clubs that promote a safe, welcoming, and accepting school environment (e.g., gay-straight alliances, which are school clubs open to youth of all sexual orientations).
- Ensure that health curricula or educational materials include HIV, other STD, or pregnancy prevention information that is





relevant to LGBTQ youth; such as, ensuring that curricula or materials use inclusive language or terminology.

- Encourage school district and school staff to develop and publicize trainings on how to create safe and supportive school environments for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and encourage staff to attend these trainings.
- Facilitate access to community-based providers who have experience providing health services, including HIV/STD testing and counseling, to LGBTQ youth.
- Facilitate access to community-based providers who have experience in providing social and psychological services to LGBTQ youth.

What Parents Can Do?

Parents should talk openly with their children about any problems or concerns and be watchful of behaviors that might indicate their children are victims or perpetrators of bullying or violence or are depressed or suicidal. If bullying, violence, or depression is suspected, parents should take immediate action, working with school personnel and other adults in the community.

Also, how parents respond to their LGBTQ child can have a tremendous impact on their child's current and future mental and physical health. Supportive reactions can help youth cope with the challenges of being an LGBTQ teen. However, some parents react negatively to learning that they may have an LGBTQ daughter or son. In some cases, children are thrown out of the house or stress and conflict at home can cause some youth to run away. As a result, LGBT youth are at greater risk for





homelessness than their heterosexual peers.

Even less severe reactions can have long-lasting negative effects. Research published in the journal *Pediatrics* found significantly higher rates of mental and physical health problems among LGBT young adults who experienced high levels of rejection from their parents while they were adolescents. Compared with LGBT young adults who experienced very little or no parental rejection, LGBT young adults who experienced high levels of rejection were

- Nearly 6 times as likely to have high levels of depression;
- More than 8 times as likely to have attempted suicide;
- More than 3 times as likely to use illegal drugs; and
- More than 3 times as likely to engage in unprotected sexual behaviors that put them at increased risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

The resources provided below can help parents better understand and respond to the needs of LGBTQ adolescents.

<http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/>

What are important health issues that lesbians and bisexual women should discuss with their health care professionals?

All women have specific health risks, and can take steps to improve their health through regular medical care and healthy living. Research tells us that lesbian and bisexual women are at a higher





risk for certain problems than other women are, though. It is important for lesbian and bisexual women to talk to their doctors about their health concerns, which include:

Heart disease. Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of all women. The more risk factors you have, the greater the chance that you will develop heart disease. There are some risk factors that you cannot control, such as age, family health history, and race. But you can protect yourself from heart disease by not smoking, controlling your blood pressure and cholesterol, exercising, and eating well. These things also help prevent type 2 diabetes, a leading cause of heart disease.

Lesbians and bisexual women have a higher rate of obesity, smoking, and stress. All of these are risk factors for heart disease. As such, lesbians and bisexual women should talk with their doctors about how to prevent heart disease.

Cancer. The most common cancers for all women are breast, lung, colon, uterine, and ovarian. Several factors put lesbian and bisexual women at higher risk for developing some cancers. Remember:

- Lesbians are less likely than heterosexual women to have had a full-term pregnancy.
- Hormones released during pregnancy and breastfeeding are thought to protect women against breast, endometrial, and ovarian cancers.
- Lesbians and bisexual women are less likely to get routine screenings, such as a Pap test, which can prevent or detect cervical cancer. The viruses that cause most cervical cancer





can be sexually transmitted between women. Bisexual women, who may be less likely than lesbians to have health insurance, are even more likely to skip these tests.

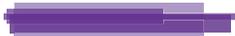
- Lesbians and bisexual women are less likely than other women to get routine mammograms and clinical breast exams. This may be due to lesbians' and bisexuals' lack of health insurance, fear of discrimination, or bad experiences with health care professionals. Failure to get these tests lowers women's chances of catching cancer early enough for treatments to work.

- Lesbians are more likely to smoke than heterosexual women are, and bisexual women are the most likely to smoke. This increases the risk for lung cancer in all women who have sex with women.

Depression and anxiety. Many factors cause depression and anxiety among all women. However, lesbian and bisexual women report higher rates of depression and anxiety than other women do. Bisexual women are even more likely than lesbians to have had a mood or anxiety disorder. Depression and anxiety in lesbian and bisexual women may be due to:

- Social stigma
- Rejection by family members
- Abuse and violence
- Unfair treatment in the legal system
- Stress from hiding some or all parts of one's life
- Lack of health insurance

Lesbians and bisexuals often feel they have to hide their





sexual orientation from family, friends, and employers. Bisexual women may feel even more alone because they don't feel included in either the heterosexual community or the gay and lesbian community. Lesbians and bisexuals can also be victims of hate crimes and violence. Discrimination against these groups does exist, and can lead to depression and anxiety. Women can reach out to their doctors, mental health professionals, and area support groups for help dealing with depression or anxiety. These conditions are treatable, and with help, women can overcome them.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). PCOS is the most common hormonal problem of the reproductive system in women of childbearing age. PCOS is a health problem that can affect a woman's:

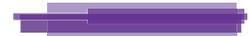
- Menstrual cycle (monthly bleeding)
- Fertility (ability to get pregnant)
- Hormones
- Insulin production
- Heart
- Blood vessels
- Appearance

Five to 10 percent of women of childbearing age have PCOS. Lesbians may have a higher rate of PCOS than heterosexual women.

What factors put lesbians' and bisexual women's health at risk?

There are a lot of things that can cause health problems for lesbians and bisexual women. Some of these may be outside of your control. Other things you can work to improve upon. These include:

Lack of fitness. Being obese and not exercising can raise your risk of heart disease, some cancers, and early death. Many studies show that lesbians and bisexual women have a higher body mass index (BMI)





than other women. Studies suggest that lesbians may store more of their fat in the abdomen (stomach area). Belly fat increases the risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Some studies also suggest that lesbians think less about weight issues than heterosexual women do.

Research shows that lesbian and bisexual women are more likely to have a higher BMI if they:

- Are African American or Latina
- Are older
- Have poor health
- Have a lower level of education
- Don't exercise often
- Live with a female partner

Are lesbian and bisexual women at risk of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

Women who have sex with women are at risk for STIs.

Lesbian and bisexual women can transmit STIs to each other through:

- Skin-to-skin contact
- Mucosa contact (e.g., mouth to vagina)
- Vaginal fluids
- Menstrual blood
- Sharing sex toys

Some STIs are more common among lesbians and bisexual women and may be passed easily from woman to woman (such as bacterial





vaginosis). Other STIs are much less likely to be passed from woman to woman through sex (such as HIV). When lesbians get these less common STIs, it may be because they also have had sex with men, especially when they were younger. It is also important to remember that some of the less common STIs may not be passed between women during sex, but through sharing needles used to inject drugs. Bisexual women may be more likely to get infected with STIs that are less common for lesbians, since bisexuals have typically had sex with men in the past or are presently having sex with a man.

Common STIs that can be passed between women include:

Bacterial vaginosis (BV). BV is more common in lesbian and bisexual women than in other women. The reason for this is unknown. BV often occurs in both members of lesbian couples.

The vagina normally has a balance of mostly “good” bacteria and fewer “harmful” bacteria. BV develops when the balance changes. With BV, there is an increase in harmful bacteria and a decrease in good bacteria.

Sometimes BV causes no symptoms. But over one-half of women with BV have vaginal itching or discharge with a fishy odor. BV can be treated with antibiotics.

Chlamydia (kluh-MI-dee-uh). Chlamydia is caused by bacteria. It’s spread through vaginal, oral, or anal sex. It can damage the reproductive organs, such as the uterus, ovaries, and fallopian (fuh-LOH-pee-uhn) tubes. The symptoms of chlamydia are often mild — in fact, it’s known as a “silent infection.” Because the symptoms are mild, you can pass it to someone else without even knowing you have it.

Chlamydia can be treated with antibiotics. Infections that are not





treated, even if there are no symptoms, can lead to:

- Lower abdominal pain
- Lower back pain
- Nausea
- Fever
- Pain during sex
- Bleeding between periods

Genital herpes. Genital herpes is an STI caused by the herpes simplex viruses type 1 (HSV-1) or type 2 (HSV-2). Most genital herpes is caused by HSV-2. HSV-1 can cause genital herpes. But it more commonly causes infections of the mouth and lips, called “fever blisters” or “cold sores.” You can spread oral herpes to the genitals through oral sex.

Most people have few or no symptoms from a genital herpes infection. When symptoms do occur, they usually appear as one or more blisters on or around the genitals or rectum. The blisters break, leaving tender sores that may take up to four weeks to heal. Another outbreak can appear weeks or months later. But it almost always is less severe and shorter than the first outbreak.

Although the infection can stay in the body forever, the outbreaks tend to become less severe and occur less often over time. You can pass genital herpes to someone else even when you have no symptoms.

There is no cure for herpes. Drugs can be used to shorten and prevent outbreaks or reduce the spread of the virus to others.

Human papillomavirus (pap-uh-LOH-muh-vah-y-ruhs) (HPV).





HPV can cause genital warts. If left untreated, HPV can cause abnormal changes on the cervix that can lead to cancer. Most people don't know they're infected with HPV because they don't have symptoms. Usually the virus goes away on its own without causing harm. But not always. The Pap test checks for abnormal cell growths caused by HPV that can lead to cancer in women. If you are age 30 or older, your doctor may also do an HPV test with your Pap test. This is a DNA test that detects most of the high-risk types of HPV. It helps with cervical cancer screening. If you're younger than 30 years old and have had an abnormal Pap test result, your doctor may give you an HPV test. This test will show if HPV caused the abnormal cells on your cervix.

Both men and women can spread the virus to others whether or not they have any symptoms. Lesbians and bisexual women can transmit HPV through direct genital skin-to-skin contact, touching, or sex toys used with other women. Lesbians who have had sex with men are also at risk of HPV infection. This is why regular Pap tests are just as important for lesbian and bisexual women as they are for heterosexual women.

There is no treatment for HPV, but a healthy immune (body defense) system can usually fight off HPV infection. Two vaccines (Cervarix and Gardasil) can protect girls and young women against the types of HPV that cause most cervical cancers. The vaccines work best when given before a person's first sexual contact, when she could be exposed to HPV.

Both vaccines are recommended for 11 and 12-year-old-girls. But the vaccines also can be used in girls as young as 9 and in women through age 26 who did not get any or all of the shots when they were younger. These vaccines are given in a series of 3 shots. It is best to use the same vaccine brand for all 3 doses. Ask your doctor which brand





vaccine is best for you.

Gardasil also has benefits for men in preventing genital warts and anal cancer caused by HPV. It is approved for use in boys as young as 9 and for young men through age 26. The vaccine does not replace the need to wear condoms to lower your risk of getting other types of HPV and other sexually transmitted infections.

If you do get HPV, there are treatments for diseases caused by it. Genital warts can be removed with medicine you apply yourself or treatments performed by your doctor. Cervical and other cancers caused by HPV are most treatable when found early. There are many options for cancer treatment.

Pubic lice. Also known as crabs, pubic lice are small parasites that live in the genital areas and other areas with coarse hair. Pubic lice are spread through direct contact with the genital area. They can also be spread through sheets, towels, or clothes. Pubic lice can be treated with creams or shampoos you can buy at the drug store.

Trichomoniasis (TRIK-uh-muh-NEYE-uh-suhss) or “Trich.” Trichomoniasis is caused by a parasite that can be spread during sex. You can also get trichomoniasis from contact with damp, moist objects, such as towels or wet clothes. Symptoms include:

- Yellow, green, or gray vaginal discharge (often foamy) with a strong odor
- Discomfort during sex and when urinating
- Irritation and itching of the genital area





- Lower abdominal pain (in rare cases)
Trichomoniasis can be treated with antibiotics.

Less common STIs that may affect lesbians and bisexual women include:

Gonorrhea (gon-uh-REE-uh). Gonorrhea is a common STI but is not commonly passed during woman to woman sex. However, it could be since it does live in vaginal fluid. It is caused by a type of bacteria that can grow in warm, moist areas of the reproductive tract, like the cervix, uterus, and fallopian tubes in women. It can grow in the urethra in men and women. It can also grow in the mouth, throat, eyes, and anus. Even when women have symptoms, they are often mild and are sometimes thought to be from a bladder or other vaginal infection.

Symptoms include:

- Pain or burning when urinating
- Yellowish and sometimes bloody vaginal discharge
- Bleeding between menstrual periods
- Gonorrhea can be treated with antibiotics.

Hepatitis (hep-uh-TYT-uhs) B. Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by a virus. It is spread through bodily fluids, including blood, semen, and vaginal fluid. People can get hepatitis B through sexual contact, by sharing needles with an infected person, or through mother-to-child transmission at birth. Some women have no symptoms if they get infected with the virus.

- Women with symptoms may have:
- Mild fever





- Headache and muscle aches
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Dark-colored urine and pale bowel movements
- Stomach pain
- Yellow skin and whites of eyes

There is a vaccine that can protect you from hepatitis B.

HIV/AIDS. The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is spread through body fluids, such as blood, vaginal fluid, semen, and breast milk. It is primarily spread through sex with men or by sharing needles. Women who have sex with women can spread HIV, but this is rare. Some women with HIV may have no symptoms for 10 years or more. Women with HIV symptoms may have:

- Extreme fatigue (tiredness)
- Rapid weight loss
- Frequent low-grade fevers and night sweats
- Frequent yeast infections (in the mouth)
- Vaginal yeast infections

Other STIs:

Pelvic inflammatory disease (an infection of the uterus, ovaries, or fallopian tubes)

Menstrual cycle changes

Red, brown, or purplish blotches on or under the skin or inside the mouth, nose, or eyelids





AIDS, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, is the final stage of HIV infection. HIV infection turns to AIDS when you have one or more opportunistic infections, certain cancers, or a very low CD4 cell count.

Syphilis. Syphilis is an STI caused by bacteria. It's passed through direct contact with a syphilis sore during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Untreated syphilis can infect other parts of the body. It is easily treated with antibiotics. Syphilis is very rare among lesbians. But, you should talk to your doctor if you have any sores that don't heal.

What challenges do lesbian and bisexual women face in the health care system?

Lesbians and bisexual women face unique problems within the health care system that can hurt their health. Many health care professionals have not had enough training to know the specific health issues that lesbians and bisexuals face. They may not ask about sexual orientation when taking personal health histories. Health care professionals may not think that a lesbian or bisexual woman, like any woman, can be a healthy, normal female.

Things that can stop lesbians and bisexual women from getting good health care include:

- Being scared to tell your doctor about your sexuality or your sexual history
- Having a doctor who does not know your disease risks or the issues that affect lesbians and bisexual women





- Not having health insurance. Many lesbians and bisexuals don't have domestic partner benefits. This means that one person does not qualify to get health insurance through the plan that the partner has (a benefit usually available to married couples).
- Not knowing that lesbians are at risk for STIs and cancer

For these reasons, lesbian and bisexual women often avoid routine health exams. They sometimes even delay seeking health care when feeling sick. It is important to be proactive about your health, even if you have to try different doctors before you find the right one. Early detection — such as finding cancer early before it spreads — gives you the best chance to do something about it. That's one example of why it's important to find a doctor who will work with you to identify your health concerns and make a plan to address them.

What can lesbian and bisexual women do to protect their health?

Find a doctor who is sensitive to your needs and will help you get regular check-ups. The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association provides online health care referrals. You can access its Provider Directory or contact the Association at 202-600-8037.

Get a Pap test. The Pap test finds changes in your cervix early, so you can be treated before a problem becomes serious. Begin getting Pap tests at age 21. In your 20s, get a Pap test every two years. Women 30 and older should get a Pap test every three years. If you are HIV-positive, your doctor may recommend more frequent





testing.

Get an HPV test. Combined with a Pap test, an HPV test helps prevent cervical cancer. It can detect the types of HPV that cause cervical cancer. Talk to your doctor about an HPV test if you've had an abnormal Pap or if you're 30 or older.

Talk to your doctor or nurse about other screening tests you may need. You need regular preventive screenings to stay healthy. Lesbian and bisexual women need all the same tests that heterosexual women do. Learn more about what tests you need, based on your age. Practice safer sex. Get tested for STIs before starting a sexual relationship. If you are unsure about a partner's status, practice methods to reduce the chances of sharing vaginal fluid, semen, or blood. If you have sex with men, use a condom every time. You should also use condoms on sex toys. Oral sex with men or with women can also spread STIs, including, rarely, HIV. HIV can potentially be passed through a mucous membrane (such as the mouth) by vaginal fluids or blood, especially if the membrane is torn or cut.

Eat a balanced, healthy diet. Your diet should include a variety of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. These foods give you energy, plus vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Reduce the amount of sodium you eat to less than 2,300 mg per day.

Drink moderately. If you drink alcohol, don't have more than one drink per day. Too much alcohol raises blood pressure and can increase your risk for stroke, heart disease, osteoporosis, many cancers, and other problems.

Get moving. An active lifestyle can help any woman. You will benefit most from about 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity each week. More physical activity means additional health and fitness benefits. On two or more days every week,





adults should engage in muscle-strengthening activities, such as lifting weights or doing squats or push-ups.

Don't smoke. If you do smoke, try to quit. Learn more about how to stop smoking. Avoid secondhand smoke as much as you can.

Try different things to deal with your stress. Stress from discrimination and from loneliness is hard for every lesbian and bisexual woman. Relax using deep breathing, yoga, meditation, and massage therapy. You can also take a few minutes to sit and listen to soft music or read a book. Talk to your friends or get help from a mental health professional if you need it.

Get help for domestic violence. Call the police or leave if you or your children are in danger. Call a crisis hotline or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-SAFE or TDD 800-787-3224, which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in English, Spanish, and other languages. The helpline can give you the phone numbers of local hotlines and other resources.

Build strong bones. Take the following steps to help build strong bones and prevent osteoporosis:

- Exercise
- Get a bone density test
- Get enough calcium and vitamin D each day
- Reduce your chances of falling by making your home safer.

For example, use a rubber bathmat in the shower or tub and keep your floors free from clutter.

Talk to your doctor about medicines to prevent or treat bone loss.





