



Transgender Youth

What does it mean to be transgendered?

People who are transgendered often feel that they don't fit in with the gender within which they were born. For example, a person may be born and raised as a girl throughout her childhood, but always feels like she should have been born as a boy. Transgendered people feel a stronger connection to a different gender and want to change themselves so that they feel or look more like that other gender. Transgendered people may be heterosexual (straight), homosexual (gay or lesbian), or bisexual. There are many different ways to be transgendered.

These are a few:

- strongly identifying with a different gender
- choosing to use male or female pronouns (he, she) when being addressed
- dressing occasionally or frequently in the clothes of a different gender
- physically altering your body through hormone treatments and/or surgeries to look and feel more like the other sex. A male who transitions to female is known as MTF (Male To Female), while females who are transitioning to males are FTMs (Female To Male).

The way you define yourself as transgendered is up to you. Yet whichever category you most closely relate to, you need to know how to take care of yourself in order to maintain a healthy body.

Is there something wrong with me?

Of course not! Traditionally, gender is seen as two categories: man/boy or woman/girl. Not many people are aware that gender is actually more like a spectrum, with many different categories and options, not just those two. If you don't feel that you fit into one of the two categories, you are not alone. Many different LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and intersexed) organizations are working to educate people that gender identity, like sexual orientation, cannot be placed into boxes.

Who do I talk to? How can I get more information?

Like with any major issue, you might want to talk to a trusted adult, such as a relative, teacher, doctor, or school counselor. You may also want to talk to a good friend or close sibling about what you are feeling, and what your options are. If you would like to talk to someone who identifies as transgender, contact some of the LGBTQI organizations located in the Philadelphia area.

Is using hormones dangerous?

When people are transitioning, they often take hormones so that they may start to physically resemble the other gender. For example, MTF often take hormones that stimulate breast growth, while FTM take hormones that stimulate hair growth on the face and other parts of the body. While some hormones may be taken orally (swallowing pills), others are taken intravenously, meaning that they are injected into the body with a syringe/needle. If you are considering hormone therapy, consult a doctor who is familiar with the different treatments available. Only your health care provider can prescribe the right hormone treatments for you. Buying hormones off the street is illegal and extremely dangerous.

Certain STIs such as HIV, and Hepatitis B and C can be transmitted by sharing needles for drugs or hormone treatments with an infected person. You may not know if the person you are sharing needles with is infected. To reduce your risk: **Never share needles!**



CHOICE

Questions? Call **CHOICE**:

1-800-84-TEENS or (215) 985-3300

Monday-Thursday 8:30am-7:30pm, Friday 8:30am-5pm, Saturday 9am-1pm

Free and Confidential

www.choice-phila.org or www.choiceteens.org

Do I still have to worry about Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

Anyone who is sexually active has to be worried about STIs. Whether you are bisexual, heterosexual, gay, or lesbian you need to be aware of all the different STIs out there. Everyone is at risk for STIs such as HIV, Herpes, Hepatitis, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis and Genital Warts. STIs can be transmitted through skin-to-skin contact or exchange of fluids, such as semen or vaginal fluids, so it is important that people of any and all sexual orientations be aware of the different ways to protect themselves when engaging in sexual activities. This includes oral sex, anal sex, vaginal sex, fingering, fisting, rimming, and the use of sex toys.

Do I still have to worry about Pregnancy?

It is important to practice safer sex every time you engage in a sexual activity. While the risk of STIs is a threat to everyone, pregnancy only affects those who have the reproductive capacity to engage in vaginal sex with a penis.

Finding a health care provider who is right for you

You deserve respect and quality care from a doctor who understands your healthcare needs. This means that you may want to research some of the health care providers (doctors, nurse practitioners, clinicians, etc.) in your area who are trans-friendly providers, meaning that they are educated about trans-health issues and do not discriminate against patients based on gender identity or sexual orientation. Here are some tips to keep in mind when you visit your doctor:

- Be open and honest with your provider. This way, he or she can be familiar with your specific healthcare needs and can provide you with the best care.
- Ask friends in the trans-community which clinics they recommend.
- Check to make sure that your provider is a LGBTQI friendly provider. Ask if he or she cares for any LGBTQI clients. If he or she cannot give you a positive answer to this question, you might want to keep looking for a provider who can.
- Find out what kinds of exams you will need annually or monthly. Depending where you are in your transitioning, you may need to schedule breast exams, gynecological appointments, testicular exams, or prostate exams in addition to other health needs.
- Contact **CHOICE** if you have any other questions or would like a referral to LGBTQI-friendly health services.

How do I have safer sex?

Here are different methods that can help reduce the risk of transmission of HIV, Herpes, Hepatitis, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis and Genital Warts.

Safer sex and talking to your partner about their sexual history are effective ways to lower risk. Abstinence is the only method that is 100%.

Safer...

Oral sex on the vagina: Use a dental dam, which is a thin square of latex which may be placed over the vagina or anus to serve as a barrier against the transmission of most STIs. You can buy dental dams at some drugstores or make them out of non-microwavable saran wrap or from a condom that has been cut down the center.

Oral sex on the penis: Use a non-lubricated latex condom or a flavored condom. You can buy condoms at drugstores in different colors, sizes, and flavors or get them for free at many clinics.

Oral sex on the anus (rimming): Use a dental dam, non-microwaveable plastic wrap, condom cut length-wise or a glove with the fingers cut off.

Vaginal Sex: Use a latex condom to help reduce the risk of transmission of HIV, Herpes, Hepatitis, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis and Genital Warts. While it is not common, it is possible for women to pass yeast infections and Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) to another female through vaginal contact.

Sex Toys: Some people enjoy using sex toys like dildos, strap-ons, or anal beads with each other during sex. Make sure to properly clean your sex toys with soap and warm water every time you use them. To make clean-up easier, you may want to consider putting a male condom on the device that can be thrown out after each use. To lessen the risk, do not share your toys with other couples and make sure to use the toy with only one person. To avoid infections caused by fecal matter, clean all devices used on the anus before bringing them into contact with the vaginal area or the mouth.

Anal Sex: Use a latex condom with lots of water-based lubricant. The anus does not create its own lubrication like the vagina, so lube is important to lower risk of transmission of HIV, Herpes, Hepatitis, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis and Genital Warts. Lubrication can also increase pleasure.

Vaginal or Anal Fingering / Fisting: When fingering or fisting, check your hand for cuts, scrapes, or torn cuticles. Many STIs are transmitted through blood as well as vaginal fluids, and if the skin on the hand is broken there is a risk of transmission during manual sex. Make sure to cover broken skin with a non-porous material such as a latex glove or finger condom (also available in drug stores). In addition, using a water-based lubrication will help lower risk of transmission and increase pleasure.