

Gay Youth

BE

WHO

YOU

ARE!

What does it mean to be gay?

Being gay or homosexual refers to men that are sexually or romantically attracted to other men. Gay men are not all the same. They have different careers and lifestyles. Gay men come in every color, shape and size.

How do I know if I'm gay?

Over time you will begin to realize and understand your sexual feelings. These may come in the forms of fantasizing, falling in love or developing a crush for another guy. Many people have to experiment and see what feels right for them. You may feel different than the other guys around you and this is ok.

What does it mean to be bisexual?

Being bisexual means that a person can have emotional, sexual and/or physical feelings for both men and women. Bisexuals may have more of an attraction for one sex or they may be equally attracted to both sexes. Also, their feelings for men and woman can change over time. A person's attraction to both men and women may be a lifetime decision or a part of a phase in discovering their sexuality. Despite what you may have heard, being bisexual does not mean that you have a hard time making up your mind, or that you are simply experimenting until you decide if you are heterosexual or homosexual. Bisexuality is a sexual identity all by itself.

How will this change my life?

Being gay may or may not change your life. Do not feel pressure from anyone to behave or act a certain way just because you are gay.

Who can I talk to?

You can talk to anyone that you feel comfortable with. Think of someone in your life that has been supportive. If you feel like you can tell a family member- tell them. If not, there are plenty of other people that are willing to listen. For instance call the confidential CHOICE Teen Hotline at: 1-800-84-TEENS. They can answer questions, find resources in your community or just listen and give support.

How do I come out?

The coming out process can be very difficult. Take it slow. When you feel comfortable you can tell someone that you feel will be understanding and that you can trust. This person may be a doctor, sibling, friend, family member or anyone that you can truly trust. It is important to understand that some people may not be as supportive of your sexual identity as you may have hoped. Just like any other personal information, you are in control of this. This can be a difficult and confusing time for you, so be patient.

Is there something wrong with me?

No, there is nothing wrong with you. If you feel alone, you are not. Lots of people are gay. Feeling like you're 'different' can be scary at times, especially when some people send out messages that homosexuality (men loving men or women loving women) is wrong. Sexuality is a hard thing to deal with regardless of your age or your sexual orientation. A lot of teens feel insecure about their bodies, relationships, and social status. Being a gay or a bisexual guy may give you a new set of issues to deal with, but it certainly does not make you weird or unlovable.

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

Should I worry about STIs?

Anyone who is sexually active has to worry about STIs. Whether you are bisexual, heterosexual, gay or lesbian you need to be aware of all the different STIs out there. Try talking to your partner about each other's sexual history.

How do I prevent pregnancy and STIs?

There are many ways to protect yourself. If you are having:

Oral sex on the penis (blow-job): Use a non-lubricated latex condom or a flavored condom. This can help reduce the risk of transmitting many STIs and HIV. Do not brush your teeth within 3-4 hours of giving oral sex. Small cuts in your mouth can increase your chances for getting an STI.

Oral sex on the anus (rimming): Use a dental dam, non-microwaveable plastic wrap, a condom cut length-wise or a glove with the fingers cut off. Don't brush or floss within 3-4 hours of rimming. This can help to prevent the transmission of many STIs and HIV.

Anal sex: Use a latex condom with lots of water-based or silicone-based lubricant. The more lubricant used, the less friction will be caused and this can help the condom not to break. This helps to protect you against many STIs and HIV.

Anal fingering/fisting: Wear a latex or vinyl glove and keep glove well lubricated. Take the glove off by pulling it over itself. Using gloves can help protect you from possible transmission of many STIs and HIV.

Vaginal sex: As mentioned earlier, there are many different ways to be gay. While some gay men may only engage in sexual relationships with men, others may occasionally or frequently have sex with women. While some may identify as bisexual, others may identify solely as gay. No matter what you identify as, if you have vaginal sex with a woman there is a risk of pregnancy. Use a barrier like a latex male condom or a female condom to prevent pregnancy and help protect you against HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis and help reduce the risk of coming into contact with herpes or genital warts.

Sex Toys: In order to limit the chance of STI exposure clean sex toys in the following way:

- Leather or wooden: wipe with disinfectant soap and hot water.
- Rubber & latex: wash with hot soapy water, rinse under running water and allow to air dry.
- Metal toys that are not inserted: soak in a bleach solution of 9 parts water and 1 part bleach. (i.e. 9 ounces of water and 1 ounce of bleach, etc)
- Metal toys that are inserted: need to be autoclaved - this can be done at piercing shops for a small fee.



How do I talk to my health care provider (doctor, nurse practitioner, clinician, etc.)?

You deserve respect and quality care from a provider who understands your healthcare needs. This means that you may want to research some of the clinics in your area who are LGBT-friendly providers, meaning that they are educated about health issues that are relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual, or trans patients and do not discriminate based on sexual orientation. Here are some tips to keep in mind when you're looking for a doctor:

- Ask others that understand your situation
- Call our teen hotline at 1-800-84-TEENS
- Contact the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association at www.glma.org
- Look at the website: www.LGBTHealthResource.org.