

# Transgender Youth

## CHOICE

Questions? Call:  
**1-800-84-TEENS**  
Or  
**(215)985-3300**

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

**Free and  
Confidential**

### What does it mean to be transgender?

People who are transgender often feel that they don't fit in with the gender within which they were raised. For example, a person may be raised as a girl throughout his childhood, but always feels like he should have been born as a boy. Transgender people feel a stronger connection to another gender and want to change themselves so that they feel or look more like a gender different than the one they were socialized since birth. Transgender is not the same thing as being homosexual, because transgender people may be heterosexual (straight), homosexual (gay or lesbian), bisexual or something else. There are many different ways to be transgender. These are just some of the few:

- strongly identifying with another gender.
- cross-dressing occasionally or frequently in the clothes of another gender other than the one they were born.
- physically altering your body through hormone treatments and/or surgeries to look and feel more like another sex. A biological male who transitions to female is known as MTF, while biologically born females who are transitioning to male are FTMs.

The way you define yourself as transgender 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. Below you will find some common questions of transgender youth, as well as important tips on protecting yourself against STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and pregnancy. You will also find some tips on finding a doctor who understands your specific health needs and concerns.

### Is there something wrong with me?

Of course not! Unfortunately, the society in which we live in only views gender 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 LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) organizations are working to educate people that gender identity, like sexual orientation, cannot be placed into these types of 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 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 LGBT organizations located in the Philadelphia area. Call the **CHOICE teen hotline** to find out about national and local organizations, resources for transgender youth, and to ask questions about gender identity, sexuality, safer sex, and general health.

### Hormone/ drug injection and STIs

When people are transitioning to another gender, one option is to take hormones to change the chemistry in their bodies so that they may physically resemble another 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), applied topically (rubbed into skin), others are taken via IM or

## Bisexuality

People that are bisexual 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 your sexuality.

subcutaneously meaning 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 (see section below on finding a doctor). Only your doctor 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. Since you may not know if the person you are sharing needles with is infected, it is best to never share needles to reduce your risk. Prevention Point Philadelphia sponsors a clean needle exchange program where you can trade in your needles for new, sterile (clean) ones. Call for their locations around the city, or stop in at their main office:

**Prevention Point Philadelphia**  
**333 W. Girard Avenue**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19123**  
**215-787-0112**

#### **Transmission of HIV and other STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections)**

**HIV** is one of the most well-known STIs, although there is still some confusion about how it is transmitted through sex. Because HIV is transmitted through blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and pre-cum, (as well as breast milk), it is extremely important that we protect ourselves while enjoying sexual activity. HIV is most commonly transmitted through vaginal, anal, or oral sex with an infected partner. HIV can also be spread through activities such as fingering and fisting if the people engaging in the activity have cuts on their hands.

#### **Safer Sex practices**

#### Anal intercourse

Use a condom with every act of anal sex (you can choose either external (male) or internal (female) condoms. Make sure to use water-based lubricants with both kinds of condoms to prevent tearing.

#### Vaginal intercourse

Use a condom for every act to reduce risk of STIs and pregnancy. As with anal sex, you can use either internal or external condoms, based on your preference.

#### Oral sex (mouth to anus or vagina)

Use a dental dam for oral sex. If you don't have a dental dam, you can substitute non-microwavable saran wrap or an unlubricated latex condom that has been cut open.

#### Oral sex (mouth to penis)

Flavored non-lubricated condoms or flavored lube.

#### Fingers to Anal or Vaginal

Finger condoms/ cots or latex gloves for fingering, gloves (for fisting), make sure to wash hands thoroughly after each act. Also, wash off all sex toys with soap and water after you use them. For easier clean-up, you might want to put a condom on sex toys that can be removed after each act (when appropriate).

**Personal safety** is something that everybody needs to know about. However, transgender people may be at high risk for hate crimes because some people do not understand them. Make sure that you tell your friends when and where you are going on a date, and carry a cell phone with you in case of an emergency. Try to avoid walking alone at night and in unfamiliar areas. Again, these tips are good for everyone, not just transgender people.

#### **Protection against 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 engage in vaginal sex with a penis.

#### **Finding a doctor 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 doctors in your area who are trans-friendly/ competent 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 doctor. This way, they can be familiar with your specific healthcare needs and can provide you with the best care.
- Ask friends in the community which doctors they recommend
- Check to make sure that your doctor is an LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) friendly provider. Ask if he or she cares for any LGBT clients. If he or she cannot give you a positive answer to this question, you might want to find a doctor who can.
- Find out what kinds of exams you will need annually or monthly. For example, if you are MTF you may need to schedule breast exams and gynecological appointments in addition to other health needs.
- Contact the **Gay and Lesbian Medical Association** ([www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org)) or the **LGBT Health Resource Center** ([www.lgbthealthresource.org](http://www.lgbthealthresource.org)) for assistance in locating a doctor in your area

## **CHOICE**

*Find more information:*

- [www.choieteens.org](http://www.choieteens.org)
- [www.choice-phila.org](http://www.choice-phila.org)
- [www.wheretofind.org](http://www.wheretofind.org)