



Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Questions:

Information for Patients



Thank you for taking the time to complete these questions. If you have additional questions, we encourage you to speak with your provider.



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NIH NATIONAL LGBT HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER
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We are asking you about your sexual orientation and gender identity in order to provide more patient-centered care. Read inside to learn what the questions mean, and how the information will be used to improve health care for all.

Q: WHY AM I BEING ASKED ABOUT MY SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY?

Learning about the sexual orientation and gender identity of our patients helps us better understand the populations we are serving. It also allows us to offer culturally responsive care that focuses on a patient's specific needs.

Q: WHAT IS GENDER IDENTITY?

Gender identity is a person's inner sense of being a girl/woman/female, a boy/man/male, something else, or having no gender.

The term "transgender" describes people whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth do not correspond based on traditional expectations.

- **Transgender woman/female** describes someone assigned male at birth who has a female gender identity.
- **Transgender man/male** describes someone assigned female at birth who has a male gender identity.

Additional gender identities include, but are not limited to:

- **Gender fluid:** describes someone whose gender identity is not fixed.
- **Genderqueer/non-binary:** describe people whose gender identity falls outside the traditional gender binary of either girl/woman/female or boy/man/male.

Q: WHAT IS SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

Sexual orientation is how people describe their emotional and physical attraction to others.

- **Heterosexual (straight)** describes women who are primarily attracted to men, and men who are primarily attracted to women.
- **Gay** describes people who are primarily attracted to the same gender as themselves. The term "gay" most commonly refers to men attracted to men.
- **Lesbian** describes women who are primarily attracted to other women.
- **Bisexual** describes people who are emotionally and physically attracted to women/females and men/males. Some people define bisexuality as attraction to all genders.

Some people use other terms, such as **queer**, to describe their sexual orientation.

Q: WHAT IF I'M NOT SURE HOW TO ANSWER?

You can select "**Don't know**" if you are not sure, or you can talk with your provider.

Q: WHAT IF NONE OF THE CATEGORIES DESCRIBE ME?

There are many sexual orientations and gender identities. Unfortunately, it is not possible to list them all. If your sexual orientation or gender identity is not included in the list provided, you can select an additional category or, if space is provided, you can write in the terms you use to describe yourself.

Q: WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO SHARE THIS INFORMATION?

You can select "**Choose not to disclose.**" Later, your provider may ask you these questions privately, and you can ask your provider questions. You never have to answer if you do not want to.

Q: WHO WILL SEE THIS INFORMATION?

Your health care providers will see this information, and it may become part of your electronic health record. If a staff member enters the information into your health record, that person will also see your answers. If you have concerns, talk to your provider.

Q: HOW WILL MY INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

Your sexual orientation and gender identity information is confidential and protected by law, just like all of your other health information. If you are under 18 years old, your parent/guardian may have access to this information. Talk to your provider if you have any concerns.

Q: HOW WILL THIS INFORMATION BE USED?

Your provider(s) will use this information to better understand and meet your health care needs. In addition, gathering this information from all patients allows health centers to see if there are gaps in care or services across different populations.

Q: WHY DO HEALTH CENTERS ASK ABOUT PRONOUNS?

Pronouns are the words people use when they are referring to you, but not using your name. Examples of pronouns are she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs. Asking about pronouns helps staff correctly refer to patients. Otherwise, staff need to make assumptions, which can lead to embarrassing and disrespectful situations.