

Sexual Orientation and Gender

Sexual orientation refers to your pattern of attraction, not behavior, to other people in terms of gender. Some of the many sexual orientations include:

- Straight/Heterosexual:** attracted to people of the opposite gender
- Lesbian or Gay:** attracted to people of the same gender
- Bisexual:** attracted to two genders of people
- Asexual:** little or no sexual attraction to people
- Aromantic:** little or no romantic attraction to people; does not describe sexual attraction

Your gender identity is your sense of yourself as a man, woman, both, or neither. **Transgender** describes people whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. **Gender non-conforming** describes people who don't identify and/or express their gender along the binary lines of man and woman—people often identify with both. **Intersex** describes people whose biological sex doesn't medically match the binary model.

Some teens identify with the umbrella term **queer** to describe any combination of non-normative gender, sex, and sexuality. Others who are **questioning** are unsure of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This is completely normal and common, especially for teens, whose identities can shift over time.

We should never assume what words people use to describe their gender and sexual orientation. It's important to respect the terms each individual identifies with. When in doubt, ask.

LGBTQIA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/aromantic, and beyond. If you identify on this spectrum, here are some things to remember:

- Nobody has the right to harass or threaten you. If this happens, talk to a trusted adult.
- You don't have to "come out" to anyone. Prioritizing your safety by staying closeted is also a courageous decision.
- Talking to supportive people can help. Supportive student organizations at your school, friends (new and old), trusted adults, and online communities are all great places to start.



Further Information

Sex, Pregnancy, and STIs
Planned Parenthood
www.plannedparenthood.org
 800-576-5544

National STD & AIDS Hotline
 800-227-8922

LGBTQIA+:
GSA Network
www.gsanetwork.org

Trevor Lifeline
www.thetrevorproject.org
 866-488-7386

Who Can I Talk To?

If you don't know who to talk to, **Teen Line** is there to help. You can call any evening between 6 pm-10 pm (PST). Our teens are there to listen to you. They've been trained in ways to help and support other teens. They'll understand how you're feeling, and help you figure out what to do next. It's free and confidential, so just call **800-TLC-TEEN (852-8336)** toll free or **310-855-HOPE (4673)** from anywhere in the US or Canada. After hours, your call will be directed to Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center. Visit our website www.teenlineonline.org for more information.



Accredited by the American Association of Suicidology

You don't know who to talk to about sex & sexuality.
We get it.



www.teenlineonline.org



Sexuality

Sexuality describes the way that you express yourself as a sexual being, and is a part of who you are as a person.

YOU have the right to:

- Have accurate information about sexuality.
- Decide how to express your sexuality.
- Protect yourself from pregnancy and STIs, including HIV/AIDS.
- Say no to unwanted touch of any kind.
- Not be pressured into unwanted sexual activity.
- Stop sexual activity at any point.

Should I have sex?

Over half of teens in high school have NOT had sex, for reasons including:

- I'm waiting for the right person.
- It's against my religious beliefs.
- I'm waiting until I'm in a lasting relationship.
- I'm worried about my reputation.
- I don't want to catch an STI.
- I just don't feel ready yet.
- I don't want to have sex.

Questions to consider before having sex:

- Have I talked with my partner(s)?
- Do I feel safe?
- Is it consensual? (See Leaflet)"
- What are my motivations?
- Am I using protection against STIs and Pregnancy?

Sex and STI's

What are STIs?

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs, also know as STDs) are caused by bacteria, viruses, or parasites. Medication can cure some STDs quickly, while others require longer treatment and attention just like other infections.

How do you get them?

STIs can pass between sexual partners in different ways. Some transmit through fluids and others through direct contact with infected skin. If you or your partner(s) have an STI, it's important to know how they are transmitted so you can prevent unwanted infection. Generally, properly used protection methods like condoms and/or dental dams combined with regular testing can lower your risk of infection.

How do you know if you have one?

A lot of people who are infected with STIs have no physical symptoms & may not be aware they have a STI. The only way to know for sure is to see a healthcare provider and get tested.

How do I get tested for an STI?

There are many places you can go to get tested, including your doctor or a family planning or STI clinic. Getting tested is important because even STIs that can be cured can lead to long-term health problems if they are not treated early.

What if I have a STI?

Whether or not you have an STI, you should communicate with partners about your and their status before having sex. As long as everybody involved knows what's going on and determine preferred protections, you can still have safe sex. You should always get tested prior to engaging in sexual activity and use protection.

How can I prevent getting an STI?

The only way to completely avoid STIs is to not have oral, vaginal, or anal sex. However, you can lower your risk by always using condoms and/or dental dams, and getting tested regularly.

Pregnancy

I just had sex – could I/my partner become pregnant?

Any sexual activity in which one person's semen enters another person's vagina, especially unprotected vaginal sex, places you at risk for pregnancy.

How can I prevent getting pregnant/ getting my partner pregnant?

Not having sex at all is the only 100% effective method of avoiding pregnancy. If you decide to have sex, use contraception. There are a variety of methods available, including birth control pills, IUDs, and condoms. Remember that only condoms will protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

I think I'm pregnant. What do I do?

First, find out for sure. You can take a home pregnancy test from the drugstore, but the best option is to see a healthcare professional.

What Exactly is Sexual Consent?

Consent means that everyone involved has **clearly, continually and enthusiastically agreed** on what sexual acts are happening. It can't happen if a person is intoxicated or in an altered state of consciousness. So, if a sober person is extremely sleep deprived (or asleep!) and can't think as they usually do, they cannot give consent.

The absence of a "no" does not grant consent—it must be communicated with a "yes" either verbally or physically. That "yes" can also be withdrawn at any time, no matter how excited the other partner(s) might be. No means no, and only yes means yes.

A "no" is also not an invitation for a negotiation. Trying to convince somebody into a sex act they have said no to is called coercion and does not lead to consensual sex—it is manipulative.