

# Medical Provider's Guide to LGBT Terminology

The LGBT community uses many different terms to describe sexual orientation, gender identity, and differences in sex development. Often, it can be difficult for health care providers to keep these terms straight and know the most appropriate and accurate words to use in practice. Reference this guide any time you need a refresher on LGBT terminology.

## A

- **Ally:** A person who does not identify with an LGBT identity but who supports LGBT people and issues.
- **Agender:** Lack of gender identity. May identify as gender neutral.
- **Asexual:** Lack of sexual attraction to others.

## B

- **Bicurious:** Interest or curiosity in exploring sexual attraction and/or experiences with more than one gender.
- **Bisexual:** Attraction to two genders. Alternatively, attraction to people sharing one's own gender and people of a different gender.

## C

- **Cisgender:** Concordance between one's sex assigned at birth and one's gender.
- **Coming out:** To willingly reveal one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity to one or more groups of people.

## D

- **DSD:** Acronym for "differences/disorders in sex development." See: intersex.

## F

- **FTM:** Acronym for "female to male." Typically used to describe transgender men.

## G

- **Gay:** Attraction of men to other men. Alternatively, attraction to people of the same gender.
- **Gender, gender identity:** The internal sense of one's gender. This may correlate to maleness, femaleness, any combination of the two, or something different altogether. Gender identity is distinct from, and not always correlated with, sex assigned at birth. It can also be distinct from how one chooses to present themselves via their gender expression.
- **Gender dysphoria:** Discomfort or distress caused by a discordance between one's sex assigned at birth, including one's primary and/or secondary sex characteristics, and one's gender identity. Gender dysphoria replaced the entry for gender identity disorder in the DSM-5.
- **Gender expression:** The outward manifestations of one's gender, including: behaviors, clothing, hairstyle, makeup, name, pronouns, voice, and more. These expressions of gender can be interpreted by others as masculine, feminine, or as belonging to both or neither category.

- **Gender identity disorder (GID):** Deprecated. See: gender dysphoria.
- **Genderfluid:** Having a gender that changes.
- **Genderqueer:** Having a gender that is not within the gender binary.

## H

- **Heterosexual:** Attraction to people of a different gender.
- **Homosexual:** Attraction to people of the same gender.

## I

- **Intersex:** A spectrum of differences/disorders of sex development in which one's genitals, chromosomes, hormones, and/or other characteristics are not all aligned with a single sex categorization.

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## L

- **Lesbian:** Attraction of women to other women.
- **LGBT:** Acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.” Often used as a shorthand when referring to communities of people not identifying as heterosexual and cisgender. Other acronyms may include LGBTQ or LGBTQIA, where Q typically stands for queer or questioning, I for intersex, and A for asexual or ally.

## M

- **MTF:** Acronym for “male to female.” Typically used to describe transgender women.

## N

- **Nonbinary:** A gender identity that is not exclusively male or female. Nonbinary people can identify as simultaneously male and female, somewhere between these two identities, or not identify as being on the traditional gender spectrum.

## O

- **Out:** To willingly have one’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity known by one or more groups of people (to “be out”). Alternatively, to have one’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity shared against one’s will (to “be outed”).

## P

- **Pansexual:** Attraction to people irrespective of gender, or attraction to people of any/all genders.
- **Polysexual:** Attraction to three or more, but not all, genders.
- **Pronouns:** The words used to refer to someone in place of their name. She/her, he/him, and they/them are common pronouns, though others exist and may be preferred.

## Q

- **Queer:** An inclusive term referring to one or more sexual orientations other than heterosexual; often used as a synonym for LGBT. Some people find the term offensive. In addition to its descriptive meaning, the word is sometimes used as an epithet.

## S

- **Sex, sex assigned at birth:** A categorization as male or female, typically assigned at birth based on examination of external genitalia. Sex is more accurately described through a combination of genitalia and other reproductive organs, hormones, chromosomes, and secondary sex characteristics.
- **Sexual orientation:** The persistent sexual attraction to one or more genders (including to people with no gender, i.e. agender). Asexuality is considered a sexual orientation. Transgender and intersex people can be of any sexual orientation.
- **Spiro:** Spironolactone.
- **Straight:** Attraction of a person of one binary gender to the other. Often used as a synonym for heterosexual.

## T

- **T:** Testosterone, androgen.
- **Trans:** Short for “transgender” or “transsexual.”
- **Transgender:** Discordance between one’s sex assigned at birth and one’s gender identity. Often, transgender people opt to take hormones and/or undergo surgery to affirm their gender identity, but a transgender identity is not dependent on taking such steps.
- **Transsexual:** Can be used to describe a transgender person who has undergone one or more gender-affirming surgery. This term has been largely replaced by “transgender.”
- **Transition:** Any step(s) taken by a transgender person to more fully embody their gender identity. This may include changes in appearance, such as the use of gender-affirming hormones, surgery, or changes to hairstyle, makeup, and dress; changing one’s name, pronouns, and/or sex designation; altering one’s voice and/or behaviors; and more.
- **Trans woman, trans female, trans feminine:** A person, assigned male sex at birth, whose gender identity is female or feminine.
- **Trans man, trans male, trans masculine:** A person, assigned female sex at birth, whose gender identity is male or masculine.