

LGBTQ+ Terminology Cheat Sheet

Language is inherently complex and continuously evolving, and terminology associated with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer+ (LGBTQ+) community is no exception.*

Here are some common terms you may encounter when caring for this patient population.¹

GENDER

- **Cisgender (adj.):** Describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Gender dysphoria:** Marked and persistent incongruence between a person's experienced gender and assigned sex at birth.
- **Intersex (adj.):** Describes a person with one or more innate sex characteristics (such as genitals, internal reproductive organs, or chromosomes) that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies.
- **Nonbinary (adj.):** Describes a person who experiences their gender identity and/or gender expression as outside the binary genders of man and woman.
- **Transgender (adj.):** Describes a person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Transition or gender affirming care:** The process a person undertakes to bring their body and/or gender expression into alignment with their gender identity; may involve social, medical, or legal transitions. *Note: A person is not required to transition socially, legally, or medically to be considered transgender. Transitioning is a unique experience for each individual and may involve all, none, or some of these processes.*
 - **Social:** may include going by a different name, using different pronouns (eg, she, he, or they), and dressing or otherwise presenting themselves differently.
 - **Medical:** may include procedures such as hormone replacement therapy and/or one or more gender confirmation surgeries.
 - **Legal:** may include changing one's name or sex on legal documents such as a passport, driver's license, or bank account.

SEXUALITY

- **Allosexual (adj.):** Describes a person who experiences sexual attraction to others (ie, who is not asexual).
- **Asexual (adj.):** Describes a person who does not experience sexual attraction.
- **Bisexual (adj.):** Describes a person who has the potential to be physically, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to people of more than one gender (not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree).
- **Gay (adj.):** Describes a person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex.
- **Lesbian (adj. or n.):** A woman whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to other women; some lesbian women may also describe themselves as gay.
- **Pansexual (adj.):** Describes a person who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to any person regardless of gender identity.
- **Sexual orientation:** A person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person (distinct from gender identity).
- **Queer (adj.):** Describes a person whose sexual orientation is not exclusively heterosexual (a term used by some but not all members of the LGBTQ+ community).

Language to Avoid

- Referring to a person as "biologically/genetically" a man, woman, boy, or girl.
- "Lifestyle" or "sexual preference" to refer to a person's sexual orientation.
- Calling a person "homosexual" who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, or queer.

GENERAL

- **Ally (n.):** Describes a straight and/or cisgender person who supports and advocates for LGBTQ+ people.
- **Closeted (adj.):** Describes a person who is not open about their sexual orientation.
- **Coming out:** A lifelong process of self-acceptance that may or may not involve telling others about one's sexuality.
- **Out (adj.):** Describes a person who self-identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and/or transgender in their personal, public, and/or professional lives.
- **Outing:** The act of publicly revealing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent; considered inappropriate and potentially dangerous by many members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Questioning (adj.):** Describes a person who is in the process of exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

*This list, dated to March 2023, is not exhaustive, and the appropriate language is subject to change. In addition, there is no one "right" way to identify with any of the above terms. You can always ask your patients how they describe themselves (eg, what pronouns they use).

¹ GLAAD Media Reference Guide. Accessed February 8, 2023. www.glaad.org/reference/terms

For additional resources on appropriate language to use for describing LGBTQ+ individuals or issues, check out:



GLAAD



The Human Rights Campaign