

LGBTQ+ Puberty

LGBTQ+

- Lesbian is a term most often used for women who are attracted to another woman.
- Gay is often used for gay men, but it can also be used as a blanket term by anyone whose sexuality is non-heterosexual, in informal conversation someone who may identify as a Lesbian for example may casually call themselves 'gay'.
- Bisexuals are people who are attracted to two or more genders. This can be simple and very general like men or women. It can also be people who are attracted to women and non-binary people, but not men, or many other combinations, it's generally very flexible.
- Transgender people are those who identify as a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth. By 'assigned at birth' it usually means that which was assigned by a doctor when they are born. Transgender people often take hormones to transition to the gender they desire to be, and may undertake gender affirming surgeries as well, though some decide not to.
- Queer is a general shorthand term used by people who want to openly identify themselves as LGBTQ+ but don't want to get into specifics or just want to easily signal that they are a part of the Queer community.
- There are some who have no or little sexual attraction as well, and don't desire any sexual activity with any gender. These people are known as Asexual.

- Takatāpui is a kupu (word) Māori which originally means 'intimate companion of the same sex' but has come to be a general label for those of divergent sexuality and gender, who are also Māori. Some Māori people prefer to use Takatāpui over terms like Queer or Transgender, as it can feel like a better signifier of their entire identity.
- Non-Binary people are a general umbrella term for those who don't fit under the 'gender-binary', that is those who don't identify as male or female.
- Some may identify with a 'third gender' of some kind. Some may be 'genderfluid' and feel their internal identity changes occasionally. Some may be 'agender' and feel a lack of any gender identity. This and many others fall under the umbrella of 'non-binary'. Non-Binary people can often use they/them pronouns, but this isn't universal. Some may use they/them along with she/her or he/him, a mix, or none at all and prefer some kind of neo-pronoun, such as ze/zir.
- Non-binary people are sometimes considered to be transgender. Some feel comfortable with this label, but others prefer to call themselves only non-binary, it is up to whatever the individual feels best.
- There are many more kinds of LGBTQ+ people than the ones listed here, a more exhaustive list can be read here:
<https://autismnz.org.nz/resources/lgbtqia-terminology-and-faq/>

Gender and Sexuality

Gender and sexuality are separate things. Just because someone is trans doesn't necessarily mean they may be lesbian or gay for instance. And just because someone is non-binary doesn't necessarily mean they identify as bisexual.

Some non-binary people describe themselves as gay or lesbian. Generally, this is done by those who still present in a way that leans either masculine or feminine, but it can also be done by those who don't, and who simply feel more comfortable with the label.

It can sometimes be difficult for those who are non-binary to articulate their sexuality. Sometimes they will use terms they feel best fit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, etc. Some may instead ignore labels, feeling they are too restrictive, or don't accurately represent how they feel. Both of these are legitimate, and whatever makes you feel comfortable is what matters.

Coming out

Coming out can be a difficult and scary process sometimes. It's a big and important step, but there are ways or people you can try to ask to make it easier for you.

You can talk directly with your parents or whoever you want to come out to if you want. This can often be very difficult however, so sometimes writing a letter, or a text message may make it easier for you. With this you have plenty of time to think about how you want to say things and explain how you feel. You could give this to who you're coming out to, and stay in the room, or leave if you need some time to calm down after doing such an important step.

If who you come out to has questions, you could answer them on the spot or ask them to write them down and give you plenty of time to respond and think about what you want to say.

Having a support person can also be useful. This could be a friend, a guardian or family member (sibling, cousin, etc.) who is supportive of you, or a therapist or psychologist you see. They can support you in writing a letter or help you when talking to those you want to come out to. They can also be there to explain things for you if you feel unable or support you if you need to leave or have a break. They could also help you practice beforehand, getting you ready for what you want to say, or questions you think might be asked.

Safe sex

Safe sex is extremely important. Most STDs spread from bodily fluids, such as semen or vaginal fluids during sexual intercourse.

Bisexual and Gay men are at a disproportionately higher risk for STDs such as HIV from unprotected anal or oral sex, as are trans woman. Bisexual woman or lesbians aren't free from risk either, as STDs can be spread through oral sex.

The best way to avoid STDs is to use protection, such as condoms if engaging in anal, vaginal, or oral sex, or in the case of oral sex with those with a vagina, using dental dams. Using protection reduces the rate of transmission of STDs and is the safest way to have sex. Some other STDs such as HPV have vaccines, and you can get yourself vaccinated if you haven't already. Your GP or family doctor will be able to help with this.

Condoms are accessible in many locations. Local queer groups will usually have a bowl of them where you can access them for free. Your doctor can also have them, and will often give them to you if you ask. Places like Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa also have local clinics that usually have free condoms, and also have appointments free for those under 22 if you want to discuss your sexual health.

Medical treatment: Accessing HRT

For a basic outline, you generally will consult with a doctor, and after some basic questions around your gender identity, how long you've been feeling uncomfortable in your body and feeling like you want to transition, you will be able to access blockers after some blood tests. If you are under 16, your access may be dependent on parental support and the local health system for prescribing HRT.

Access to hormones themselves, such as Estrogen and Testosterone, may take a bit longer, as depending on the doctor they may want to give you some time on blockers before starting them or may give them to you to start alongside blockers. This can also depend on your age.

How long or short the process of attaining hormones is can be very dependent on where you are, as there is no universal standard of care for transgender people within New Zealand and some doctors may have little to no experience in prescribing hormones. However, with the exception of specific rare medical conditions that make HRT more risky, they generally will have no reason to deny you access to them. And if the GP you are seeing is not trans-positive, you always have the option to look for someone with more experience, or more willing to learn.

Gender Minorities Aotearoa also has a useful guide on HRT in New Zealand, with plenty of information to read on its effects, the process to get them, and the right you have to receive them with informed consent.

<https://genderminorities.com/2017/10/01/transgender-nz-new-zealand-hormone-replacement-therapy/>

Accessing treatment & support: Other information.

Gender Minorities Aotearoa keeps a map of specialists or services in your area. A lot of these may be able to help you navigate your local health system and be able to tell you about doctors and services that are supportive for trans people, or be able to direct you on who to talk too.

They also have a good overview of other information, like how to bind safely.

<https://genderminorities.com/resources/transgender-health-directory/>

Inside Out also has a lot of resources going through various LGBTQ+ concepts you may find useful to watch, or to show relatives if you need help explaining how you feel, or to educate them if they need help understanding. It also has a list of local LGBTQ+ organizations who you may be able to access for local support.

<https://insideout.org.nz/for-youth/>