



ARC Young Adult Mental Health Information Series

This document has been compiled from medically validated sources and is intended to be used for informational purposes only. It does not replace the opinion of a healthcare provider.

Gender Dysphoria

Gender dysphoria is not a mental illness but the feeling of discomfort or distress that occurs in people whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth or sex-related physical characteristics. These feelings occur for at least six months. This feeling affects many, but not all, transgender people before they begin living as their authentic selves (transition and gender expression). It can occur at any point during life, from childhood to adulthood. People with gender dysphoria may experience severe emotional and psychological distress if they're unable to express their experienced gender and/or if they don't receive the support and acceptance they need.



Symptoms

- A feeling of conflict and incongruence between one's experienced gender (the gender one identifies as) and primary and secondary sex characteristics (the gender assigned at birth).
- A strong desire to no longer have their secondary or primary sex characteristics.
- A strong desire to have the primary and secondary sex characteristics of the other gender
- A strong wish to be the other gender.
- A strong wish to be treated and seen as the other gender.
- A strong belief that one has the typical reactions and feelings of the other gender, not their sex.
- Preference for friends of other genders.
- Rejection of or dislike of things associated with assigned gender (this can include biological sex characteristics as well).

If not addressed and the person remains unsupported:

- feeling anxious, depressed, and ashamed.
- Thoughts of suicide.





Causes

There is no known cause of gender dysphoria but may start with biological changes that happen before birth. The anxiety, stress and general discomfort associated with gender dysphoria may be linked to social stigma. Gender nonconforming children, adolescents and adults often face discrimination and verbal harassment. One in 4 are physically attacked, and more than 1 in 10 are victims of sexual assault.

Treatment

Treatment options might include changes in gender expression and role, hormone therapy, surgery, and behavioural therapy.

Changes in gender expression possibly include:

- Change your name and the pronouns by which people refer to you (he, she or they).
- Update your gender on government-issued identification.
- Dress in a manner that's more masculine, feminine or gender-neutral.
- Make aesthetic changes, which may include adding or getting rid of facial hair.

Medical therapies may include gender-affirming hormones:

- Masculinizing hormones for trans men.
- Testosterone blockers and feminizing hormones

Gender affirmation surgery

Talking with a licensed mental health professional can help you:

- Address the negative feelings you're experiencing.
- Learn coping skills and different ways of thinking.

Therapy may also include:

- Prescriptions for medications to help you gain better control of anxiety or depression.
- Emergency counselling if you're experiencing a crisis and having suicidal thoughts

Resources available

Aire Ouverte for youth 12-25 years of age. 5811 Taschereau Blvd., local 30, Brossard, QC J4Z 1A5
Drop-in services: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 1:00-8:00 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. By appointment from Monday to Friday. (450) 445-4474

Interligne Helpline (24/7) – (514) 866-0103 (Montreal), 1(888) 505-1010, www.interligne.com

Project 10 Promoting the personal, social, sexual and mental wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, intersex and questioning (2SLGBTQ+) youth and adults 14-25 – (514) 989-4585, www.p10.qc.ca

Trans Lifeline Direct support to trans people in crisis, by the trans community – 1 (877) 330-6366 (24/7), www.translifeline.org

Psychosocial support available at your local CLSC and through your primary care physician.

CLSC St-Hubert (450) 443-7400

CLSC Brossard (450) 445-4452

CLSC St-Jean-sur-Richelieu (450) 358-2572

CLSC Richelieu (450) 658-7561

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