

## Transgender and Gender Non-Binary (TGNB) Common Terms

*Keep in mind that definitions can vary greatly across communities and individuals, and that it is best to give all patients an opportunity to provide information on how they identify when seeking care. Here are some terms related to the experience of those who are TGNB<sup>1</sup>.*

**Agender** (adj.): ‘Without gender,’ individuals identifying as having no gender identity.

**Cisgender** (adj.): A person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth match (i.e. a person who is not transgender).

**Gender** (noun): A social construct regarding culture-bound conventions, roles, and behaviors (i.e. gender expression) for, as well as relations between, genders.

**Genderqueer** (adj.): A term used by some individuals who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female. These individuals may identify as transgender, may desire to be on hormones or undergo surgery, or may not.

**Gender affirming surgery (GAS)** (noun): Surgeries used to modify one’s body to conform more with one’s gender identity.

**Gender Expression** (noun): How a person represents or expresses one’s gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.

**Gender Fluid** (adj.): Having different gender identities at different times, migrating between male and female identities.

**Gender Identity** (noun): Our gender identity is how we see ourselves. Some of us see ourselves as women, some as men, some as a combination of both, some as neither. Some of us have complex identities that may even be fluid and change over time. We all make hundreds of conscious decisions every day about how we are going to express our gender.

**Gender Non-Conforming** (adj.): Describes a gender expression that differs from a given society’s norms for males and females.

**Honorific** (noun): A title or word implying or expressing high status, politeness, or respect. Along with Mr. Mrs. Miss, etc., Mx (pronounced as ‘mix’ or ‘mux’) is a general neutral honorific for that may be used for non-binary individuals.

**Intersex** (noun): An umbrella term that includes many variations of differential sex development, which is sometimes referred to as those born with a Difference of Sex Development (DSD).

**Non-binary** (adj.): Describes a person whose gender identity falls outside the traditional gender binary of male and female; sometimes abbreviated to NB or “enby.” Some people identify as “non-binary,” while others identify with another non-binary gender identity, such as genderqueer, gender fluid, or agender.

**Pansexual** (noun): Also referred to as omnisexual, describes a person who is romantically or emotionally attracted to people of all sexes and gender identities.

**Pronoun** (noun): A word that takes the place of a noun. She, herself, they, and this are examples of pronouns. You can use the singular pronoun “they” until someone tells you their preferred pronoun.

**Queer** (adj): A term used to express fluid identities and orientations. Historically it has been used as a both a derogatory term toward LGBTQ+ people, and an empowering identity embraced by LGBTQ+ individuals challenging binary and oppressive structures.

**QTPOC /QWOC** (abb.): An abbreviation for Queer & Trans People of Color and Queer & Trans Women of Color. These terms are rooted in the concept of intersectionality and describe the compounding oppression experienced by individuals with multiple marginalized identities.

**Questioning** (adj.): Describes an individual who is unsure about or is exploring their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**Sex assigned at birth** (noun): The sex (male or female) given to a child at birth. Most often this is based on the child’s external anatomy. Also referred to as “assigned sex at birth” or “Natal Gender.”

**Trans man/transgender man/transmasculine** (noun): A transgender person whose gender identity is male. Some may use these terms to describe themselves, while some will just use the term “man.” The phrase “assigned female at birth” is commonly used by individuals in self-reference.

**Trans woman/transgender woman/transfeminine** (noun): A transgender person whose gender identity is female. Some may use these terms to describe themselves, while some will just use the term “woman.” The phrase “assigned male at birth” is commonly used by individuals in self-reference.

**Transgender** (adj.): Describes a person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth do not match. Also used to include gender identities outside of male and female. Sometimes abbreviated as trans.

**Transition** (noun): For transgender people, this refers to the process of coming to recognize, accept, and express one’s gender identity. Most often, this refers to the period when a person makes social, legal, and/or medical changes, such as changing their clothing, name, sex designation and using medical interventions.

**Transphobia** (noun): The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of transgender or gender non-conforming people or those who are perceived as such.

**Transsexual** (adj.): Sometimes used in medical literature or by some transgender people to describe those who have transitioned through medical interventions. Avoid using this term to describe transgender people unless they identify themselves as such, as it is largely outdated and can be perceived as negative to some.

**Two-Spirit** (noun): A contemporary term introduced in 1990 at the Third Annual Inter-tribal Native American, First Nations, Gay and Lesbian American Conference, and a translation of the Anishinaabemowin term *niizh manidoowag*. While today two spirit is often included under the umbrella of LGBTQ and is sometimes used by to describe non-heterosexual sexual orientation by North American indigenous peoples, traditionally the concept of two spirit people described gender variant individuals who occupied a distinct and unique gender status outside of male/female, and may have held specialized work, community and spiritual roles within their tribes<sup>2</sup>.

**TERMS TO AVOID:** The following terms are considered offensive by most and should not be used: she-male, he-she, “real” woman/man, transvestite, “preferred,” transgendered, “a transgender,” sex reassignment surgery, sex change, tranny, male-to-female, and female-to-male.

<sup>1</sup>National LGBT Health Education Center. “Affirmative Care for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People: Best Practices for Front-line Health Care Staff.” Fall 2016. <https://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Affirmative-Care-for-Transgender-and-Gender-Non-conforming-People-Best-Practices-for-Front-line-Health-Care-Staff.pdfnot-too-late-to-advocate.html>.

<sup>2</sup>Re:searching for LGBTQ2S+ Health. Two-Spirit Community. Retrieved June 11, 2019 from: <https://lgbtqhealth.ca/community/two-spirit.php#:~:text=The%20creation%20of%20the%20term,term%20niizh%20manidoowag%2C%20two%20spirits>.