



**Developmental  
Disabilities  
Planning Council**

*Easy Read Edition*

# **A Self-Advocate's Guide to Gender- Affirming Health Care**

**Part 2: What is sex assigned at  
birth? What is being transgender  
or nonbinary? What is being  
intersex?**

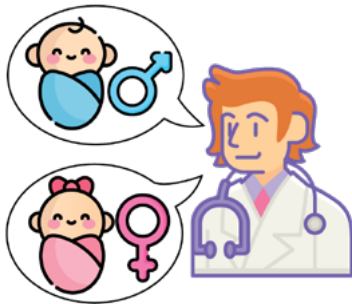
# What is sex assigned at birth? What is being transgender or nonbinary? What is being intersex?

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## Sex Assigned at Birth



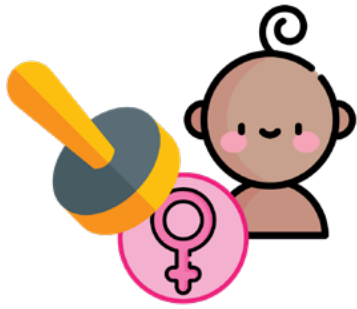
When a baby is born, the doctors look at its body.



Then the doctors say if the baby is a boy or a girl.



Someone who the doctors say is a boy is **assigned male at birth.**

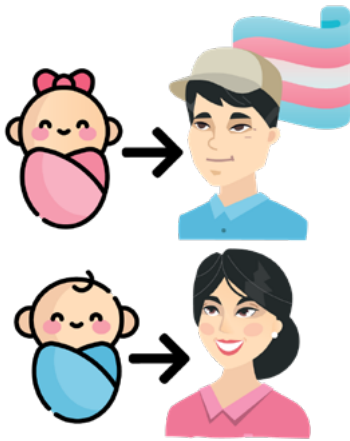


Someone who the doctors say is a girl is **assigned female at birth**.

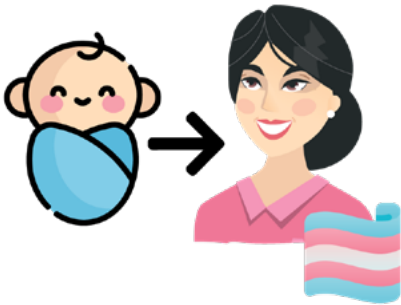


**Sex assigned at birth** is whether someone is assigned male or assigned female at birth.

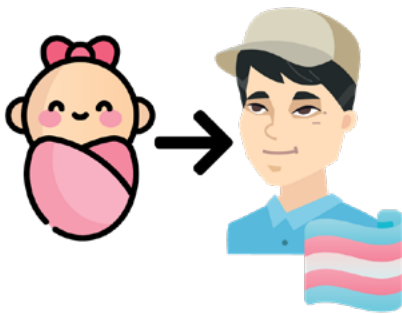
## Being Transgender or Nonbinary



A **transgender** person is someone whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.



A transgender woman is a woman who was assigned male at birth.



A transgender man is a man who was assigned female at birth.

For example:



Lisanna is a transgender woman.



When Lisanna was born, the doctors thought she was a boy.



So the doctors assigned Lisanna male at birth.



But Lisanna is a woman.

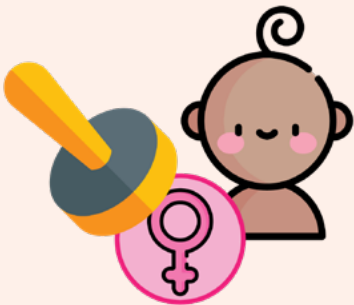
Here is another example:



Markus is a transgender man.



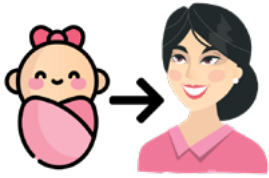
When Markus was born, the doctors thought he was a girl.



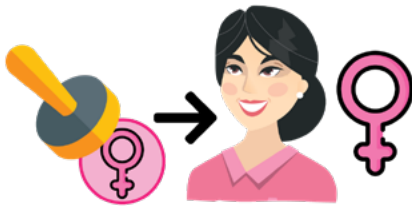
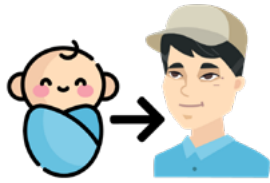
So the doctors assigned Markus female at birth.



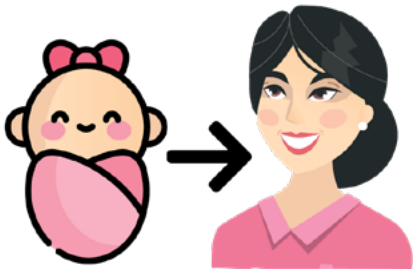
But Markus is a man.



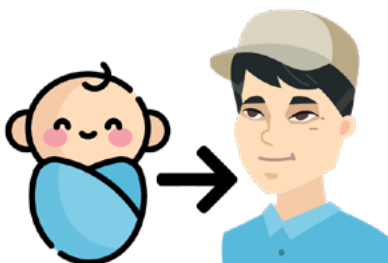
The opposite of being transgender is being cisgender.



A **cisgender** person is someone whose gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.



A cisgender woman is a woman who was assigned female at birth.



A cisgender man is a man who was assigned male at birth.



A **nonbinary** person is someone who is not a boy or a girl or a man or a woman.



Another word for nonbinary is **genderqueer**.



Some nonbinary people think of themselves as transgender.



Other nonbinary people do not think of themselves as transgender.





Nonbinary people can be assigned either sex at birth.

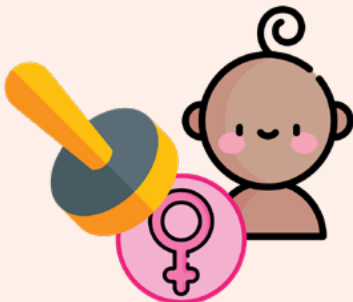
For example:



Kelly is nonbinary.



When Kelly was born, the doctors thought Kelly was a girl.



So the doctors assigned Kelly female at birth.



But Kelly isn't a woman or a man.



Kelly says their gender is "something else."



Kelly is nonbinary.

Here is another example:



Jay is genderqueer.



When Jay was born, the doctors thought Jay was a boy.



So the doctors assigned Jay male at birth.



But Jay is not a woman or a man.

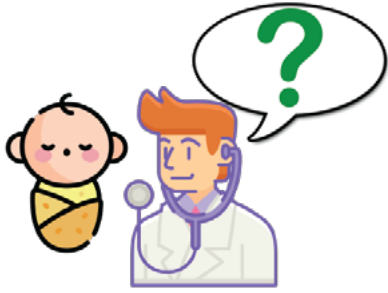


Jay says that they do not have a gender.

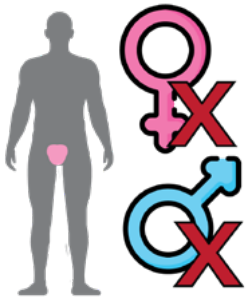


Jay is genderqueer.

## Being Intersex



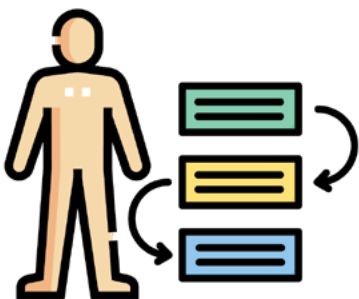
Sometimes when a baby is born, the doctors cannot decide whether the baby should be assigned male or female.



The baby might have genitals (sexual body parts) that are not typically “female” or typically “male.”



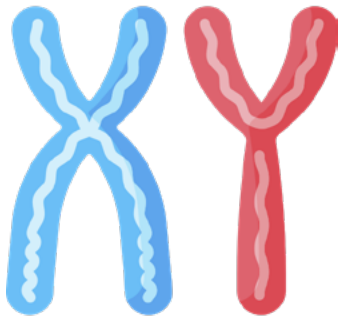
The baby might not have chromosomes that are typically male or female.



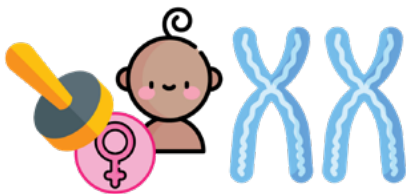
**Chromosomes** are instructions in your body that tell your body how to work.



You can find out someone's chromosomes through a blood test.



Humans have two kinds of chromosomes that tell our bodies how to make our genitals (sexual body parts): X chromosomes and Y chromosomes.



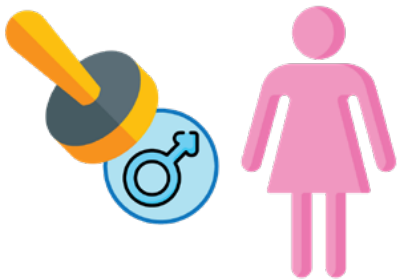
Most people assigned female at birth have XX chromosomes.



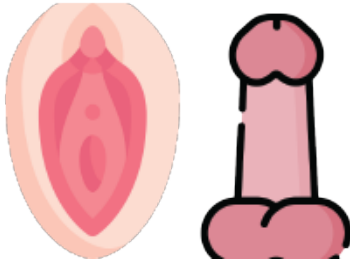
Most people assigned male at birth have XY chromosomes.



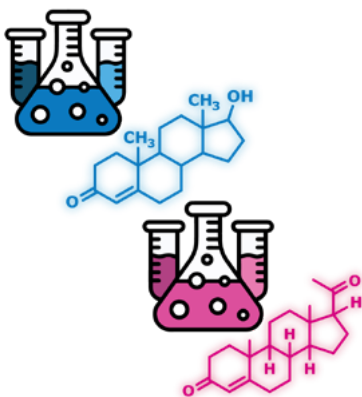
Someone might be assigned a sex at birth.



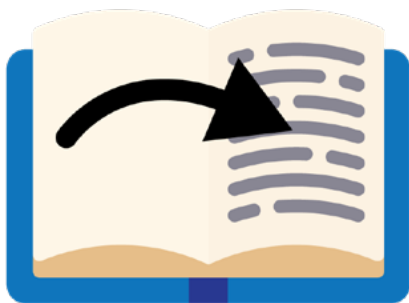
But when they grow up, their body does not look like most bodies assigned that sex at birth.



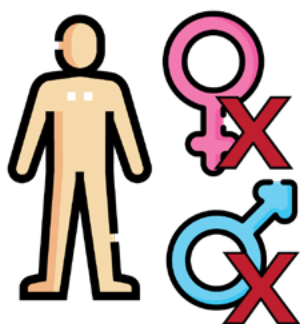
They might have different sexual body parts.



Or they might have different hormones.



(We will talk about what hormones are in the next section.)

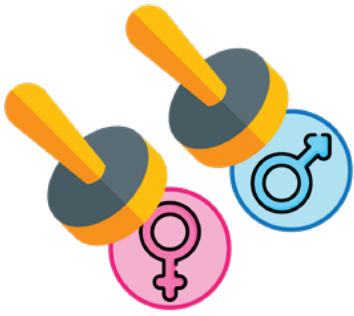


Their body does not fit into being completely male or completely female.

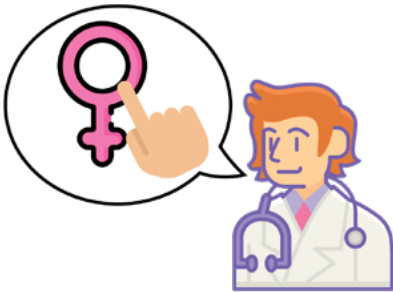


That person is **intersex**.





Many intersex people are still assigned a sex at birth.



Doctors may “pick” the sex they feel the baby is closest to.

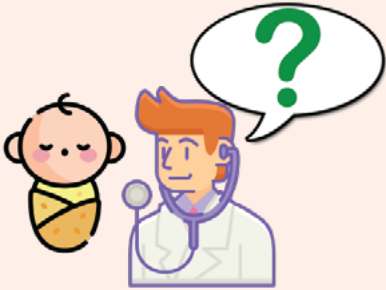


Doctors will then tell the parents they should raise the baby as this sex.

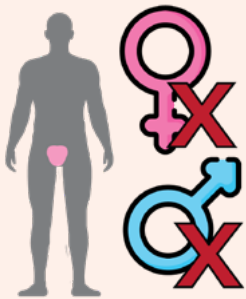


For example:

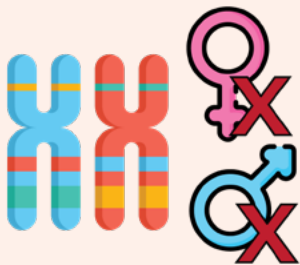
Helena is intersex.



When Helena was born, the doctors could not decide whether Helena should be assigned male or female.



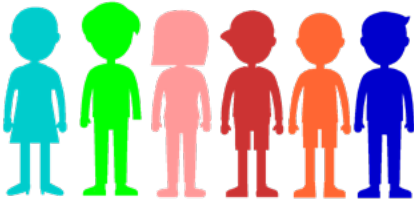
Helena's genitals (sexual body parts) were not typically "female" or typically "male."



Helena did not have typical "female" or "male" chromosomes.



Helena is intersex.



Intersex people can be any gender.



There are intersex girls and women.



There are intersex boys and men.



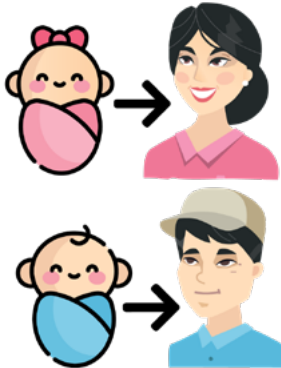
There are intersex nonbinary people.



Some intersex people are transgender or nonbinary.



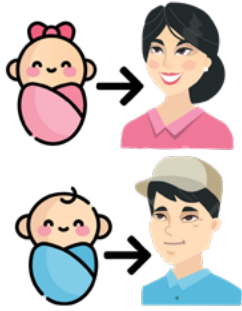
Other intersex people are not transgender or nonbinary.



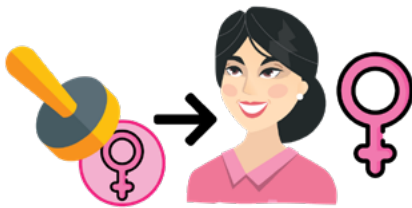
These intersex people are cisgender.



Being intersex is not the same thing as being transgender or nonbinary.



Some intersex people are cisgender.



Cisgender means that a person's gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

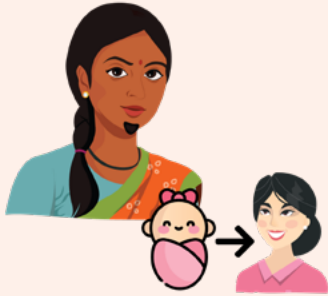


Cisgender intersex people agree with their birth assigned gender.



Cisgender intersex people may use surgery to feel more like their birth assigned gender.

For example:



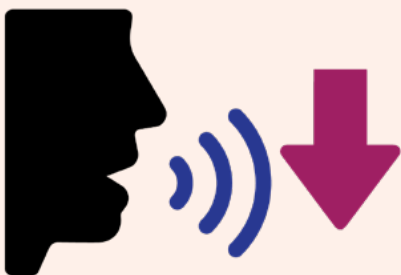
Lakshmi is an intersex cisgender woman.



When Lakshmi was born, the doctors assigned her female at birth.



But when Lakshmi grew up, her body started to look more “male.”



Her voice got lower.



She grew facial hair.



Because of this, Lakshmi is intersex.



Lakshmi is still a woman, though.



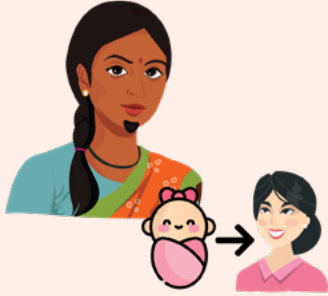
She calls herself a woman.



She thinks of herself as a woman.



Lakshmi is intersex.

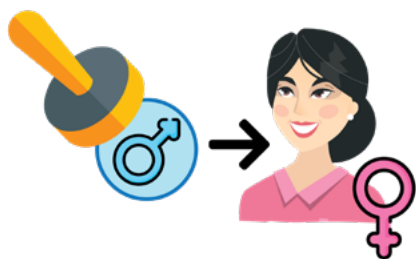


And she is a cisgender woman.





Some intersex people are transgender or nonbinary.



Transgender and nonbinary intersex people are a different gender than their birth assigned gender.



Transgender and nonbinary intersex people may use gender realignment surgery to feel more like their gender.

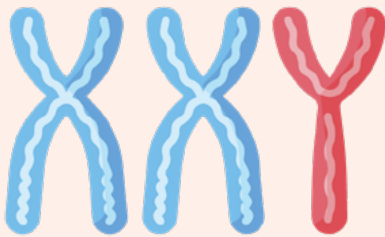
Here is a third example:



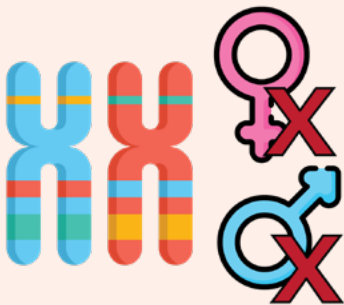
Halley is an intersex nonbinary person.



Halley was assigned male at birth.



But Halley has XXY chromosomes.



They do not have typically male or typically female chromosomes.



That makes Halley intersex.



Halley is nonbinary.



They call themselves nonbinary.



They think of themselves as nonbinary.



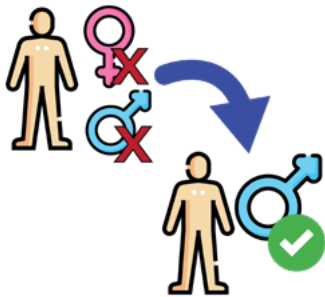
Halley is intersex.



And they are nonbinary.



Sometimes doctors will do **intersex surgeries** on intersex babies and children.



Intersex surgeries are when an intersex person's body is changed to better “match” their birth assigned sex.



Intersex surgeries are different from emergency surgeries to make sure the baby is safe.



Emergency surgeries on intersex babies are done when the baby is in danger.



Emergency surgeries are not about making an intersex baby “match” their birth assigned sex.



Sometimes doctors will give other treatments to intersex babies and children to help them better “match” their birth assigned sex.



These treatments may include hormones or hormone blockers.



This is different than when transgender or nonbinary people choose to take hormones or hormone blockers.



A transgender or nonbinary person is choosing hormone therapy to feel more comfortable in their body.



A doctor telling an intersex person they need hormone therapy to better “match” their gender is pressuring them.



Doctors may call these treatments **medically necessary** when they are not.



Medically necessary means someone will become sick if they do not have this treatment.



Forcing someone to have a medical treatment they do not need is not right.



Intersex people deserve truthful information about their medical care.



Intersex people deserve to choose if they want treatments that change their body.



Some intersex people do need surgery.

An intersex person might need surgery:

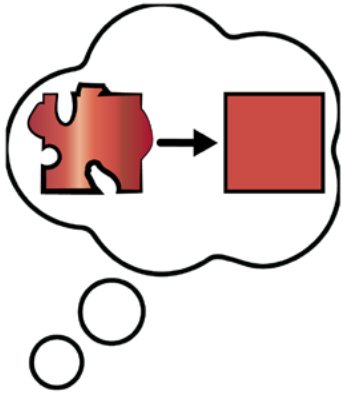


- if their condition makes it hard for them to pee.



- to remove body parts that have a high risk of getting cancer.





But a lot of intersex surgeries only happen because the doctors or parents want the person's genitals to look more 'normal.'



Intersex adults may choose to have surgery to feel more comfortable in their bodies.



Intersex adults may choose surgery after looking at all of their options.



Intersex adults that have surgery are making a decision for themselves.



But babies cannot choose things.



Intersex surgeries done on intersex babies are done without the babies' consent.



Consent is when someone understands what will happen and agrees to it.



Intersex surgeries on intersex babies can cause problems as they grow up.



Intersex children can also be pressured into intersex surgeries.



Parents or doctors may tell intersex children that they need these surgeries. But they do not really need them.



Parents or doctors might not explain things in a way children understand.

They might not explain things like:



- what these surgeries are.



- how these surgeries will change the intersex child's body.



Doctors might pressure parents to agree to treatments that are not medically necessary.



This is not fair.



Intersex children deserve to have medical choices explained to them.



Intersex children deserve the right to choose what to do with their bodies.

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