

ME

MY SEX

& I



Zoom in on my body

This brochure was edited by the Bioscope of the University of Geneva, in collaboration with RTS Découverte and SANTE SEXUELLE SUISSE, as part of the Sciences, Sexes, Identités project ([www.unige.ch/ssi](http://www.unige.ch/ssi)).

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# HEY YOU

Whoever you are, whatever your gender, sex, romantic or sexual attraction is, this brochure offers an introduction to your genitalia, and how to observe and take care of it. We are also going to speak about your body's biological functions relating to desire, sexual arousal and pleasure. These functions start really early, fetuses touch their genitalia in the womb, and babies also do it after, because it's a pleasant feeling. As we grow up our genitalia change under the influence of hormones, especially during puberty: they grow, change shape and color, and grow hairs. However, their functionalities related to pleasure stay the same throughout our entire life. To guide you through it, Zep and Hilde Atalanta (@the.vulva.gallery) drew some pictures for you!

You may feel very curious or not, awkward or not, about these matters. It's all normal! Since we're not really used to talking about genitalia or even looking at it, you might feel uncomfortable reading this brochure. It's up to you to see how you feel and if you want to read it or not.

To create this brochure, Maéva (@bioscopelab) and Elvire (@clitrevolution) based their research on 3000 young people's questions asked on Ciao.ch.

This brochure was first written in Switzerland. In this version, you will find resources based in the USA. However, some of our advice or suggestions may not apply depending on the context.

On [Scarleteen chat service](#), you can get information, education and support within the scope of sex and sexuality, sexual health and relationships.



You can also ask questions on the [Planned Parenthood chatbot](#).



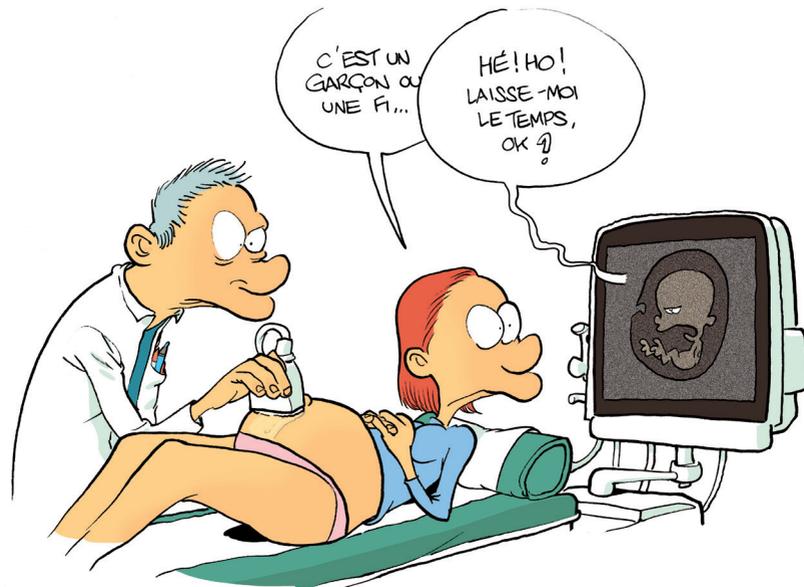
If you want, you could also try to talk with your parents or leave this brochure around for them to read. They can also find resources on [Sex Positive Families](#).



# SEX IS NOT GENDER!

Puberty is a period in life where your body goes through a lot of changes, and where questions about your body, and sexual and romantic interests can arise. It's also a moment in life where you discover more and more about who you are on the inside.

In our society, at birth, we look at a baby's genitalia in order to claim: 'it's a boy' or 'it's a girl'. We call that 'gender assignment'. In reality, your sex (how your body is made) and gender identity (how you feel in your body) are two different things. And in life, our bodies and identities are not limited to only two categories, feminine/masculine, they are much more diverse than that!



- Is it a boy or a gi... - Hey! Give me some time please !

## YOUR QUESTION

*'Hello. Here is my problem: I'm 14 years old, I am a boy, but I feel like a girl on the inside (in my head) and a boy on the outside (voice, outfits, genitals). But I really feel like a girl; it's not just that I want to, it's more than that. I hope that you'll be able to help me, I don't know what to do.'*

## OUR ANSWER

*For certain people, the gender they are assigned at birth doesn't correspond to their gender identity, to who they really are. If you are questioning your identity, you are not alone ! Maybe you could contact an association which could give you some advice and support (you will find a list of resources and associations in this brochure).*

## SEX

In biology, the term 'sex' includes all of the body parts (genitalia, but also chromosomes, hormones, etc.) which result in your body being considered as female, male or intersex. But in everyday language, we also use the term 'sex' to talk about genitalia, so it's easy to get confused.

It's possible to have genitalia that are not shaped exactly like a vulva or a penis. That could mean you were born with a variation of sex development, that you are intersex. There are many different variations of sex development, some of which are visible at birth, others that only appear at puberty and some that remain undetected. If you are not intersex, you are a dyadic person.

### DID YOU KNOW?

*We don't use the term 'hermaphrodite' for an intersex person. It's a biological term used for species in which individuals have two sexes, like the majority of plants.*

## GENDER

Your gender identity is the extent to which you feel like a girl, a boy, a bit of both, or neither. Your gender expression is how you decide to show your identity, by your haircut or outfits for example.

If you recognize yourself in the gender that was assigned to you at birth, you are a cisgender person. If you don't recognize yourself in the gender that was assigned to you at birth, then you are a transgender person. For example, if you were born with a penis thus assigned male, but you know that your gender identity is female, you are a transgender (or trans\*) girl/woman. If you were assigned female at birth because you have a vulva and a uterus, but you know that your gender identity is male, you are a trans\* boy/man.

We often write trans\* to include all of the possible trans-identity variations. For example, trans\* non-binary people do not identify in the female/male categories.

Your body and therefore, your genitalia don't define your gender identity. You are the only person who can feel and determine what is your identity. For certain people, it's very clear since childhood and for others it takes more time. It can also fluctuate and become clearer with time.

Ultimately, what matters is that you feel comfortable within yourself and free to be yourself within your community. It is indeed one of your rights to be able to live by your gender identity freely. In this brochure, we use terms such as 'vulva' or 'penis' to speak about genitals, but you are the best judge in naming your own.

WHAT ARE  
MY GENITALS  
SUPPOSED  
TO LOOK LIKE?

It's completely normal to ask ourselves that question. All genitals are different and unusual, let's not lie to ourselves, the drawings in biology textbooks are confusing. To better understand how your genitals are made, we'll guide you through a little self-exploration session.

Find yourself a comfortable and quiet spot where you are sure that no one will bother you. Get yourself a mirror (if it's magnifying, even better!) and perhaps a flashlight if it's dark. Breathe in. Are you ready? Let's go. We are not used to seeing our own genitals so it can feel a bit weird. Don't rush. It's normal not to find everything the first time. If you don't feel at ease, you can also stop and start again some other time. It takes time to get used to it. If what you see doesn't resemble the drawings: do not panic! There are as many shapes of genitals as there are people. And all the shapes and sizes are likable, desirable and can allow us to feel pleasure, whether alone or with someone, if we want to and choose to.

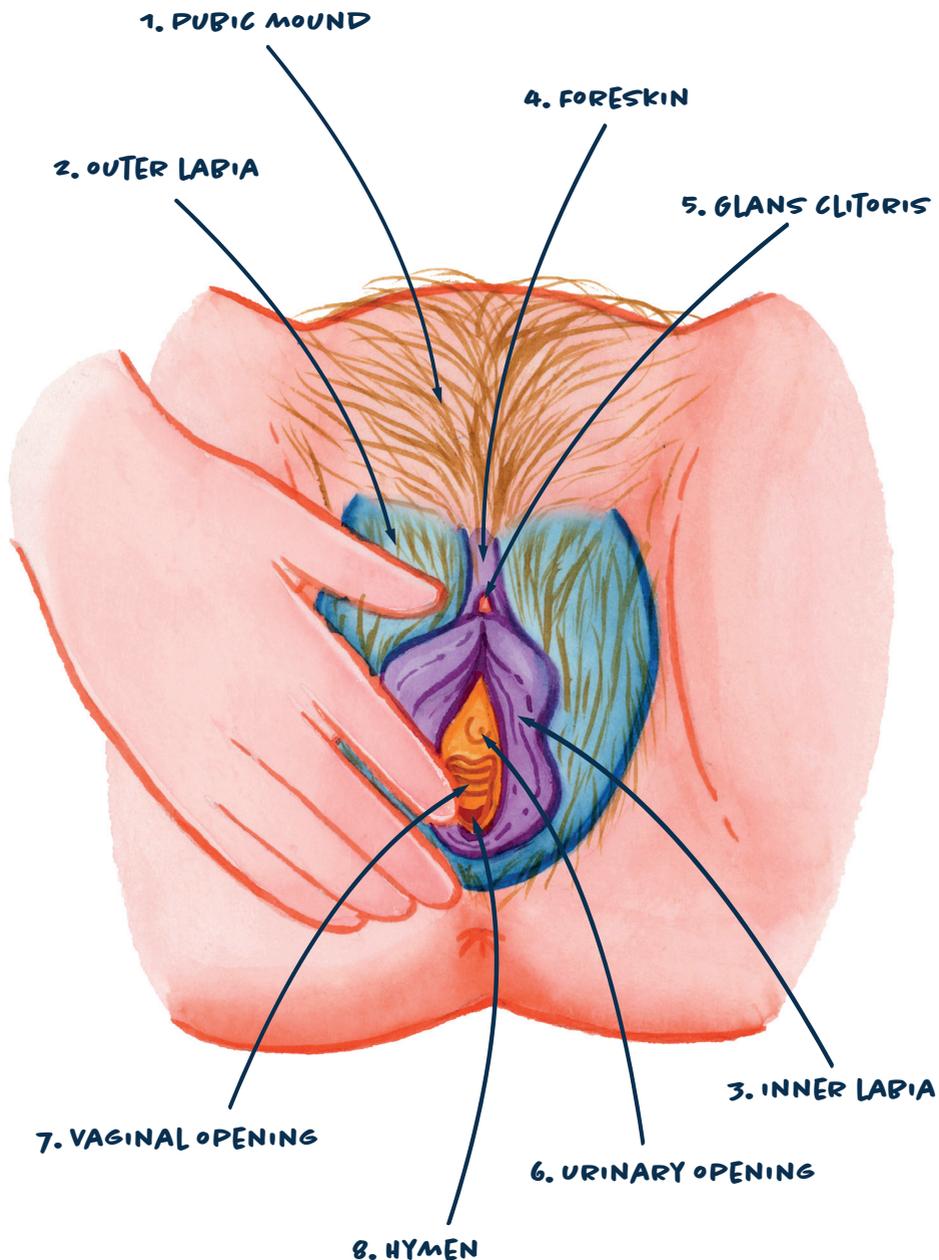
### DID YOU KNOW?

*A major part of teenagers' worries related to their genitals are about their appearance: 'my penis is bent, is it normal?', 'one of my inner labia is much bigger than the other, it's weird', 'my penis is too small, how can I make it bigger?', 'my clitoris sticks out too much'. Whilst in reality, what is normal is that all genitals are different and unique.*

## IS MY VULVA NORMAL?

In books, labia are most often presented open so that we can see everything. But in real life, it's possible that you'll need to spread your labia yourself to examine every corner of your anatomy. Take off your underwear and get into a position that allows you to see your vulva with the help of your mirror.





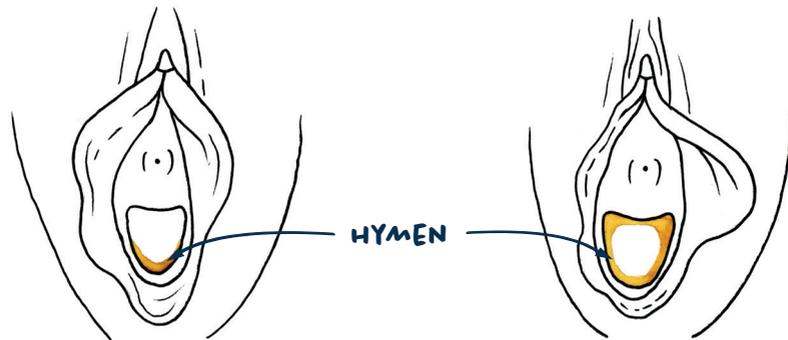
All genitalia are made with the same parts, they are just organized differently if you are female, male or intersex. Compare the corresponding parts with the images on p. 21 and 25.

Begin by going down in a straight line from your belly button and you will rapidly find the pubic mound or Mound of Venus (1). It's like a little pillow which, depending on your age and on individuals, is more or less covered with hairs, just above your vulva. Below, between your thighs, you should see your outer labia, which are, or will be, covered with hairs as well (2). Perhaps you can also see your inner labia (3), which may be small or big, and may or may not come out of your external labia, be asymmetrical or even have a color gradient. Where the inner labia meet, at the top, you will probably find your clitoral hood (also called the foreskin) (4). Depending on the size of the hood, if you spread apart the skin, you might even see the tip of the clitoral glans (5). Not everybody can see it and it really depends on the person. For some it's very visible, and for others not at all. You may be able to feel it, like something a bit hard that moves under your fingers when you move it from left to right. If this gives you special sensations, like some sort of tickle for example, it's normal, because it's one of the most sensitive parts of your whole body. If you go down a bit more in a straight line from the glans of the clitoris towards your bottom, the first thing you will find is the urinary opening (6), it's a very small and often triangular hole. That's the hole you use for peeing. Usually, in drawings, it is represented right in the middle between the vagina and the clitoris, but its position varies from person to person. Simply continue down and you will find the vaginal opening (7).

Unlike most drawings in books, you won't find a gaping hole, and you will have to slightly spread the inner labia to see the inside. The periphery of the vaginal opening is made of a sort of stretchable mucosal crown: the hymen (8).

## THE HYMEN

Contrary to popular belief, your hymen is not a membrane blocking the vaginal opening like a security guard, which rips or pops like cling film upon a first penetration. Far from it! Think of it rather as an elastic scrunchie! You don't 'lose' it and you have it for your whole life. It is a structure whose appearance may vary a lot from person to person, due to hormones and age. For example, it becomes more elastic at puberty. The hymen can be found around the rim of the vaginal opening. It follows its walls sometimes regularly, sometimes only on the bottom (like a crescent). It may show little bits of skin here and there, like petals. Very rarely, the hymen can also cover the vaginal opening or have flanges. If that is the case, you can talk about it with a doctor. In fact, your hymen is unique, just like you are.



## GOOD TO KNOW

It is completely normal not to bleed during our first vaginal penetration! Actually, about half of people don't bleed upon a first penile vaginal intercourse. And if there is blood, it doesn't necessarily come from the hymen, but can also come from the vagina.

## YOUR QUESTION

*I would like to understand how period blood can go through if we have a hymen. I know that the body is well made but I don't understand.*

## OUR ANSWER

*As you can see on these images, the hymen doesn't really obstruct your vaginal opening (except in some rare cases), but rather is in the periphery. Blood or vaginal discharge can then easily get through, just like a tampon, menstrual cup, or fingers, for example.*

## CAN SOMEONE KNOW IF I'VE ALREADY HAD SEX?

Often, when we talk about having sex we think about vaginal penetration. In reality, having sex is much more varied than that and can involve no penetration at all! Kissing, caressing, masturbating, can also be considered as having sex. Nobody, except you and the person you had sex with, can know for sure if you've ever had sex, regardless of the type of sex. And a doctor cannot know for sure, by examining your hymen, whether or not you have had penetrative sex.

## FGM: WHAT IS IT?

Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) is a term that comprises multiple practices of vulva modification for non-medical reasons. Different forms of FGM/C are practiced and described, such as the cut of the clitoral hood (type 4), removal of the clitoral hood and sometimes of part of the glans of the clitoris (type 1), removal of the labia (type 2) or sewing of the external or internal labia to close the vulva (infibulation, type 3).

FGM/C can have a negative impact on physical and/or mental health, which varies between people, the context and the type of mutilation. People also refer to FGM as female circumcision.

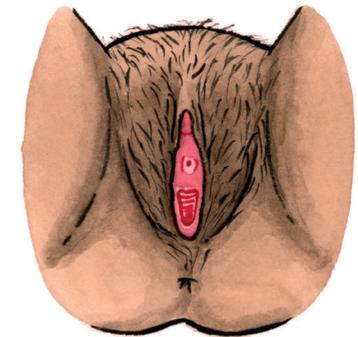
Depending on the type of FGM/C, when the clitoris has been cut, the majority of the internal organ is intact. Sexual pleasure and orgasms are therefore still possible.

FGM is prohibited in most states in the USA and in many countries around the world, including in the majority of countries in which it is still traditionally practiced.

You will find more information and advice on [endfgmnetwork.org](http://endfgmnetwork.org). Specific consultations exist in gynecological clinics if you have questions or worries that you'd like to discuss with a specialist.



TYPE 1 FGM



TYPE 2 FGM



TYPE 3 FGM



[endfgmnetwork.org](http://endfgmnetwork.org)

# WE ALL HAVE THE SAME GENITALIA (ALMOST)

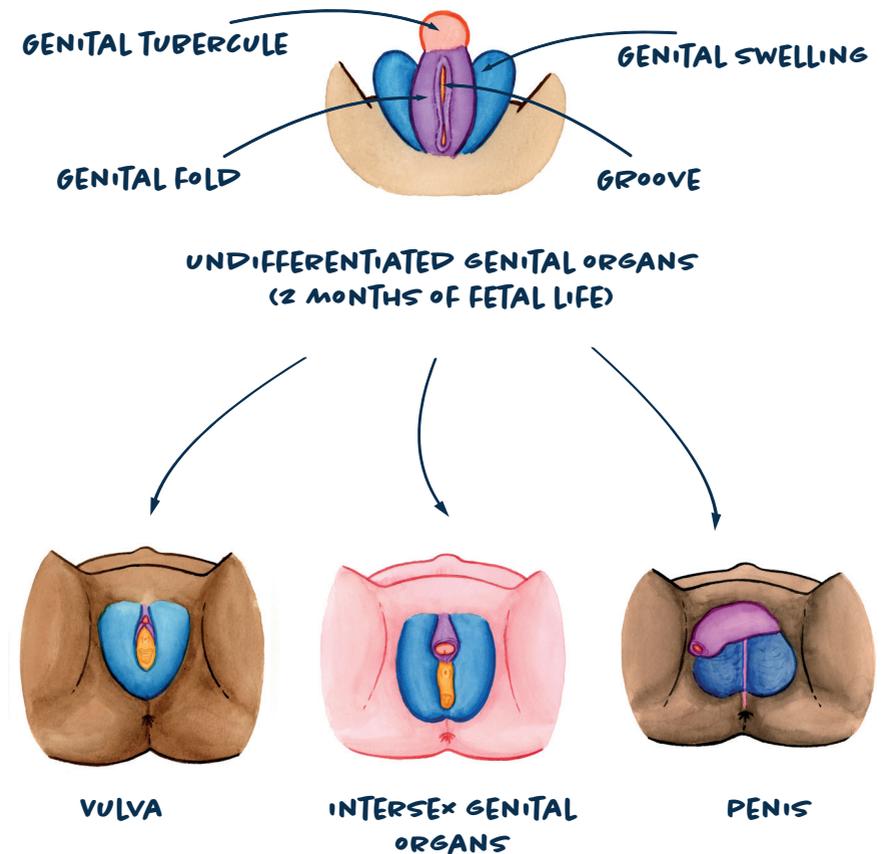
Your genitalia are unique, just like your nose and ears! No two are the same. When you were a fetus the size of a cherry, you had undifferentiated genitalia. That's to say your genitalia wasn't yet in its final form and that it was very small. And you know what? Your aunt, your sister or your grandpa had exactly the same genitalia as you. All genitalia are the same in the beginning. They start becoming different during the 3rd month of pregnancy, under the influence of your genes (DNA) and hormones, and this is how they will acquire their final form at birth.

All genitalia are made of the same parts, they are just organized a bit differently if we're male, female or intersex. Compare the corresponding parts with the images on p.14 and 25.

Whatever you call genitalia, they all have common characteristics:

- They allow you to urinate (pee)
- They can contribute to reproduction
- They are very sensitive to touch
- They can have an erection
- They can lubricate
- They can bring pleasure and contribute to experimenting an orgasm.

Dick, pussy, etc., in the end it's all the same!



The video [The Origin of Sexes](#) can help you better understand how your genitalia was formed.



The Origin of Sexes

## AND IF I AM INTERSEX, ARE MY GENITALS NORMAL?

Bodies and genitalia come in an immense diversity of shapes. In our society, this diversity is usually reduced to only two categories: 'female' and 'male'. Several biological criteria are employed to distinguish them such as chromosomes, hormones or genitalia.

If you are an intersex person, your body may have biological characteristics from both the male and female categories, but many other variations exist! The vulva can have a very large clitoris and the penis can be very small. That is why we say that genitalia exist in a continuum or spectrum (a bit like a color gradient). All genitalia are unique and have a place on this gradient.

If you are intersex, you may have been operated on once or several times, without having been able to express your own opinion about it. Surgeries are often performed on healthy bodies for cultural, aesthetic and non-life-threatening reasons. Such surgeries are justified only in a minority of cases, for example when a baby cannot urinate. They can have heavy consequences both physically and mentally for people. Many individuals and organizations fight these practices: it's a question of rights. We all have the right to make choices about our own body, and that comes with clear and free consent.

If this happened to you, at birth or during your childhood, you might be able to see the scars of these interventions on your genitals [p.23]. If you have questions, worries, want to find resources, or just want to talk and seek support, you can contact organizations such as [InterAdvocates](#) or [InterConnect](#).



# IS MY PENIS NORMAL?

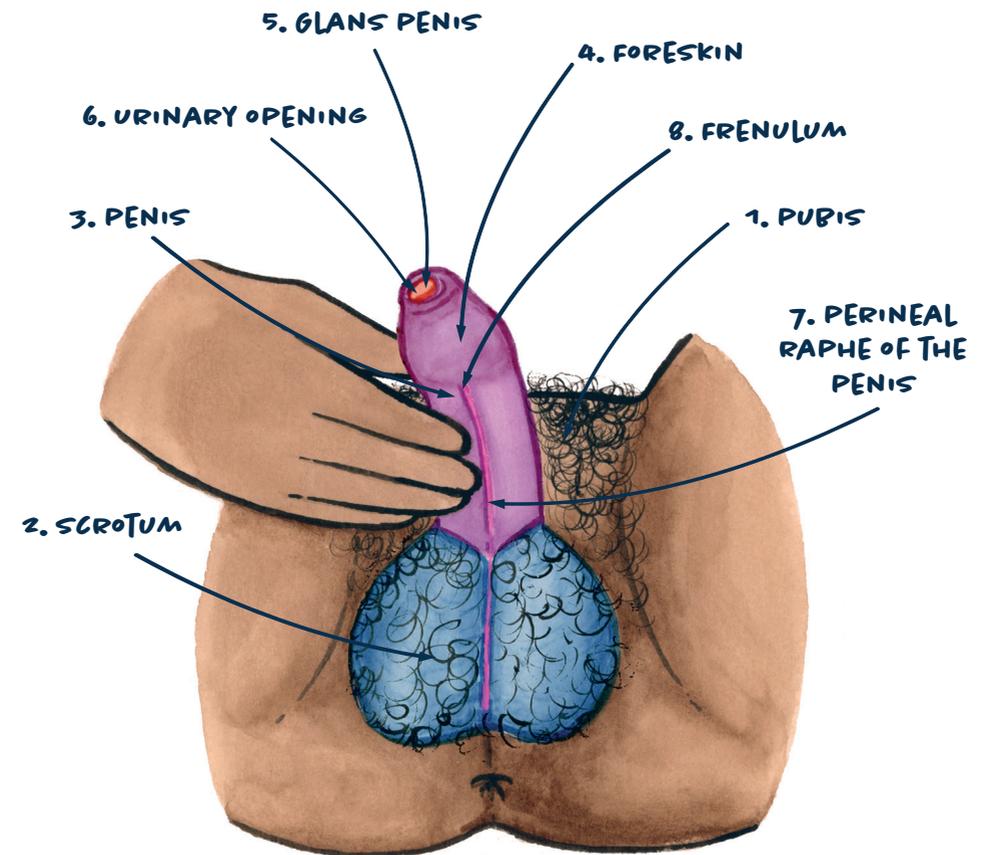
There isn't one penis but many penises, all very different from one another. To know your penis properly, you'll need to observe it to identify its different parts. While it's usually thought about and represented as being erect, the penis is in fact 'at rest' most of the time. Thus it's naturally soft!

All genitalia are made of the same parts, but they are organized a bit differently whether male, female or intersex. Compare the corresponding parts with the images on p.14 and 21.

In our society, we often see only one type of image, so we easily think that we're different from others. And we are! What is normal is for every penis to be unique, and a multitude of shapes, sizes, colors and curvatures exist.

What you can see when you look down: first the pubis (1), which depending on age and the individual is more or less covered with hairs. Under the pubis is the penis (3). They come in all sizes, widths and lengths. At the end of your penis, if you aren't circumcised (we explain what that is below), you can see your foreskin (4). That's what the skin covering the tip is called, and it can come in lots of different shapes. If you gently pull the skin towards your belly, you can see the glans (or tip) (5). At the tip of the glans, or sometimes just underneath, you can find a hole, that is your urinary opening (6). That's the hole through which you urinate, lubricate (when you create lubricant or pre-seminal fluid) and ejaculate. Between the body of your penis and the glans, there is a little piece of skin that links them and draws a line, dividing your glans in two (like an apricot), that is the frenulum (8). Under your penis hangs your scrotum (2). That's where your two testicles are found. To regulate their temperature, or to react to arousal or fear, they can go higher or lower. On the scrotum, between the testicles and all along the penis, you can see a line, the perineal raphe. To see it you can use a mirror. This line is a trace

of the groove that your genitals had when you were just a fetus. Under the influence of testosterone, during the 3rd month of uterine life, it is closed-up. This groove is still present in people with a vulva.





# I AM A TRANSGENDER PERSON, WHAT ARE MY POSSIBILITIES?

If you have questions about your gender identity or if you are trans\*, you may feel uncomfortable with certain parts of your body. This discomfort may be almost absent for some, be a source of great suffering for others, or may be felt only in certain situations. For example, if you are a trans\* girl, perhaps the idea that your penis may create a bump under your clothes makes you uncomfortable. If you are a trans\* boy and you have breasts, maybe you wish to hide them. There is no rule. If you are suffering or feeling uncomfortable, there are ways to help you!

Organisations such as the [Trevor Project](#), [the LGBT National Help Center](#) or [Gender Spectrum](#) provide information, support and resources to LGBTQ young people.

You can also find support from other trans people on [translifeline.org](#).

Certain trans\* people, but not all, decide to undergo a medical transition, take hormones, have surgery, or both, to modify their body and/or genitals' appearance, so it corresponds better to their identity. Being able to access information on available options and making the decisions that concern your body and health are part of what we call your sexual rights.

## WHAT IS CIRCUMCISION?

It is a genital modification practice that consists of removing a part or all of the penis' foreskin. The glans is therefore not covered anymore. It can be done for medical reasons (in the case of pain or difficulties to pull back for example). It's also done as part of religious or socio-cultural practices. Just like for any other act that impacts your body, you have the right to make your own choices. If you were circumcised without your consent, that is something you can discuss with a doctor.

It is possible, if you are circumcised, that your glans is slightly less moist and that its appearance is smoother than for uncircumcised people.



The trevor Project



LGBT National Help Center



Gender Spectrum

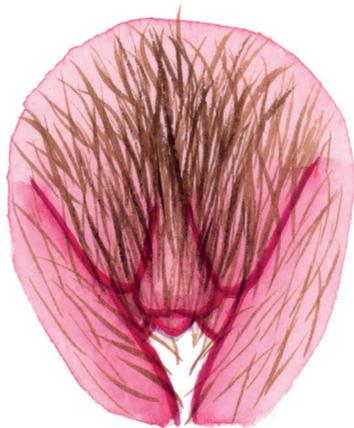


Translifeline

## THE MEDICAL TRANSITION - HORMONES

There are hormonal treatments which can temporarily delay puberty. If you're not completely sure of how you feel, or if it doesn't feel like the right time for you to go through puberty, this can prevent changes to your body you are not comfortable with. If and when you want the treatment, your doctor may prescribe it to you.

When you feel ready, you can stop these treatments and take hormones that will allow you to go through puberty in the gender you feel. As such, if you wish to, you can take a hormonal treatment such as estrogens or testosterone. Like any treatment, it can have numerous effects which are more or less desired. Estrogens will, amongst other things, stimulate breast growth, increase fat distribution around the hips and refine skin texture. Testosterone will lower your voice, stimulate hair growth such as the mustache and beard, and will make the clitoris bigger. Some people use the word dicklit, for example, to refer to a clitoris that has grown under the effect of testosterone. To maintain their effects, hormones must often be taken for life.



**THE VULVA CHANGES UNDER THE EFFECT OF TESTOSTERONE**

## YOUR QUESTION

*Are there some transgender people who, even though they are not happy with their sex, don't want to undergo a medical transition and accept the sex in which they were born?*

## OUR ANSWER

*Every person is unique no matter in what body they are born or what their gender identity is. Therefore, there are some trans\* people who undergo a medical transition (by taking hormones and/or undergoing surgery), and others who don't. What matters is that you feel good.*

## MEDICAL TRANSITION - SURGERIES

First of all, you must know that surgery is not mandatory in order to be recognized in the gender you feel. But certain trans\* people wish to have operations in order to modify their body, to achieve comfort or to reduce their suffering. For example, a young trans\* man can decide to have his breasts removed or a young trans\* girl can decide to have her testicles removed.

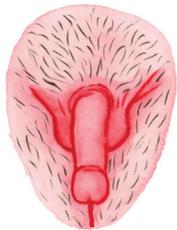
Sex reassignment surgeries involve changing the genital organs of a person, such as making a neo-vagina for a person who was born with a penis, or a neo-penis for a person who was born with a vulva. However, these organs won't have exactly the same functions as organs which haven't been modified. For example, a neo-penis won't be able to have an erection without a manual pump and a neo-vagina won't be able to lubricate naturally. It's important to know that even though these operations are complex, pleasure and orgasms are possible. You can find information and explanations of the different surgeries by contacting the [Trevor Project](#), [the LGBT National Help Center](#) or [Gender Spectrum](#).



**METOIDIOPLASTY**



**ORCHIDECTOMY**



**PHALLOPLASTY**



**VAGINOPLASTY**

ALL WIRED  
FOR DESIRE  
AND PLEASURE



The Trevor Project

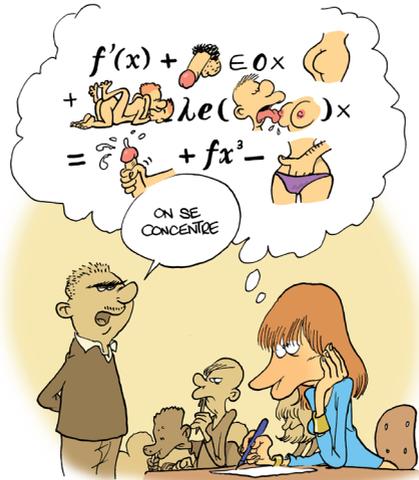


LGBT National  
Help Center



Gender Spectrum

# I THINK ABOUT SEX A LOT, IS IT NORMAL?



- Let's focus

Throughout puberty, besides changes to your genitalia, changes are also happening to your brain and the rest of your body. Therefore, it is completely normal to ask yourself questions about your feelings towards your identity, sexual desires or their absence and your relationships with others.

Your thoughts and feelings about sexuality are influenced by a lot of different things: your age, what you've heard or learned from your family or friends, your culture, religion, the media, your personality, your life experiences but also biology. When you reach puberty, your brain becomes more mature and your hormones increase. Together, this can stimulate your interest in sexuality, and you may have the feeling that you are thinking about it a lot. In fact, what you are feeling is sexual desire. It's also completely legitimate and normal not to think about all of that, but to prefer to read a book or watch a show, that depends entirely on you.

## YOUR QUESTIONS

*I think about sex and masturbation a lot, am I an addict?*

*Is it normal to look at sexual stuff and think about sex sometimes even though I am a girl? Sometimes I am ashamed of myself.*

*Every time I masturbate, at the end of it I feel really ashamed, disgusted with myself, anyways it's weird, what do you think about it?*

**OUR ANSWERS ON PAGE 32**

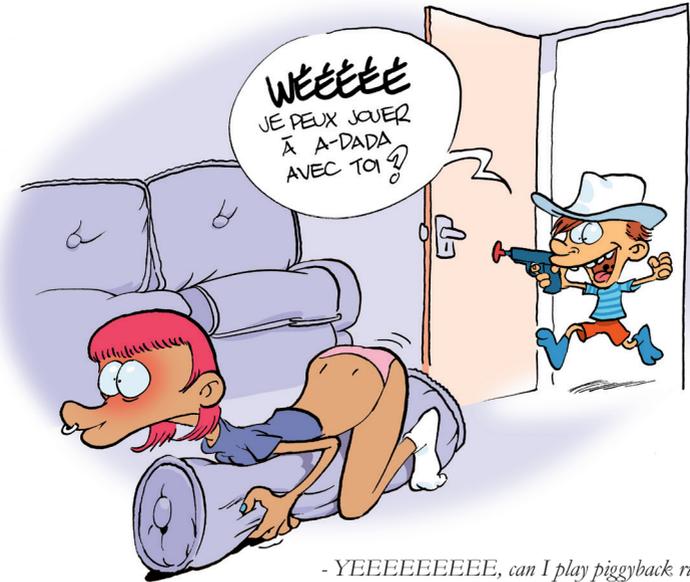
## DID YOU KNOW?

*The attraction and sexual desire we feel towards people varies from person to person. Some people feel attraction and sexual desire easily or often, while others, such as asexual people, feel very little or no sexual attraction and desire. Nonetheless, they can be attracted and desire romantic relationships and tenderness with other people or themselves.*

## PLEASURE IS A FUNCTION OF YOUR BODY

At school or at home, when we speak about sex we usually talk about reproduction and the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, rather than pleasure, which is a bit taboo. However, desire and pleasure are both biological functions of the body, and there is no shame in feeling or talking about them. Actually, humans are not the only species that feel sexual pleasure.

More than 1,500 animal species have sexual interactions that are not related to reproduction. It can take place through sex with individuals of the same or of the opposite sex, or with themselves. Sexual pleasure that ensues from these behaviors can contribute to release of tension, such as for bonobo monkeys, or create cooperation links between individuals, which is the case for certain male dolphins.



### YOUR QUESTION

Why do I like to rub between my legs?

### OUR ANSWER

Between your legs is where your genitals are, and they're very sensitive to touch. Moreover, skin is the largest sexual organ in the body. You like to rub yourself because it most certainly makes you feel good. It's a way to feel pleasure: it's a biological function of the body.

## ATTRACTION AND DESIRE

Attraction is when you are drawn to a person, a bit like a magnet. Desire, on the other hand, is wanting intimacy or an intimate sexual act.

Attraction depends on a multitude of things and is very different from person to person. You may be attracted by the appearance, style, personality, intelligence, sense of humor of a person, or a thousand other things. You can be attracted suddenly or gradually. If you are attracted to someone, you may want to spend a lot of time with them, you may fall in love, have the desire to be physically closer to them, to kiss them, caress them or make love with them. When you are in love, certain parts of your brain become activated, creating changes in your body such as your heart beating faster. When you feel a sexual desire, other parts of your brain activate, and the sensations can therefore be different.

### DID YOU KNOW?

*Sexual and romantic orientation refers to which gender(s) we're attracted to. It also includes if you feel a lot or not a lot of attraction and desire. There are an infinite number of orientations because everybody is unique, but one thing is for sure, we do not choose our sexual and romantic orientation, we feel it.*

Maybe you feel it in your tummy or in your genitals for example. That's why these feelings sometimes arrive at the same time, and sometimes they don't. Love and desire are not always present at the same time, and that's normal.

Desire, wishes, affinities and attraction are unique to each person and are not the result of an active choice.

### YOUR QUESTIONS

*"I like boys but to get turned on I look at images of girls, does that mean I'm bi?"*

*How do I know if I'm heterosexual or gay???"*

### OUR ANSWER

*Romantic and sexual attraction can vary at different moments in your life and according to who you meet and what you experience. For certain people, it can be obvious, but for others it's not, and that's normal as well. You can look at [the gender unicorn](#) to see the infinite diversity of identities, orientations and attractions.*



The gender unicorn

## THE BRAIN IS THE MAIN SEXUAL ORGAN

The brain, all on its own and without you taking care of anything, constantly analyzes your thoughts and the information coming from your 5 senses. If something related to sexuality (an image, a smell, etc.) arrives, it presses the gas pedal of sexual arousal, a bit like in a car. Just like a car, it also has a brake. Your brain constantly perceives, through your thoughts or via your senses, threats and signals which imply a situation is not arousing for you. That's the brake. Your level of sexual arousal depends, from one moment to another, on the balance between what makes you more or less aroused.

The voice or the smell of the person to whom you are attracted to, erotic thoughts, or sexual images can increase your arousal. On the other hand, stress, shame or worries about what your partner is thinking can make it decrease.

When you are aroused, your brain communicates to your body and your genitalia through the nervous system. The information goes both ways : your genitals are very sensitive to touch and temperature changes. Especially the glans, which possesses a multitude of special sensors which communicate signals to your brain. Genitalia are part of what we call the erogenous zones, as are the mouth, breasts, nipples, neck, ears, wrists and anus. They can be different from person to person.

Whether the information comes from your brain or your body, if desire is stimulated and not slowed down, it increases sexual arousal, which is your body's natural response. You can feel it in your head, in your body, or both.

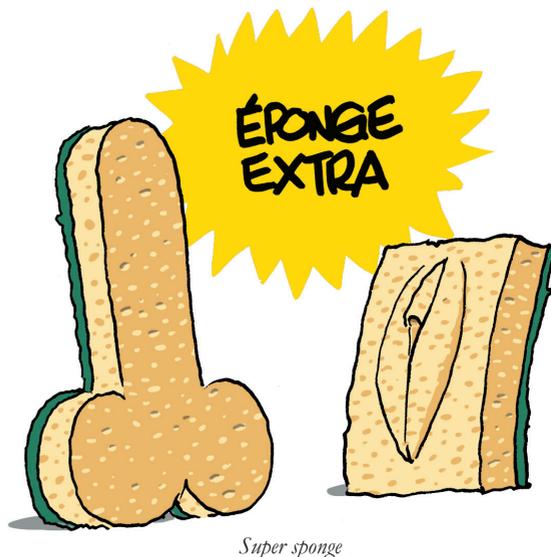


- It's more modest

# WHEN YOU HAVE A BONER...

Sexual arousal rushes blood towards your genitalia and to the surface of your body. That's why you may blush when you are aroused!

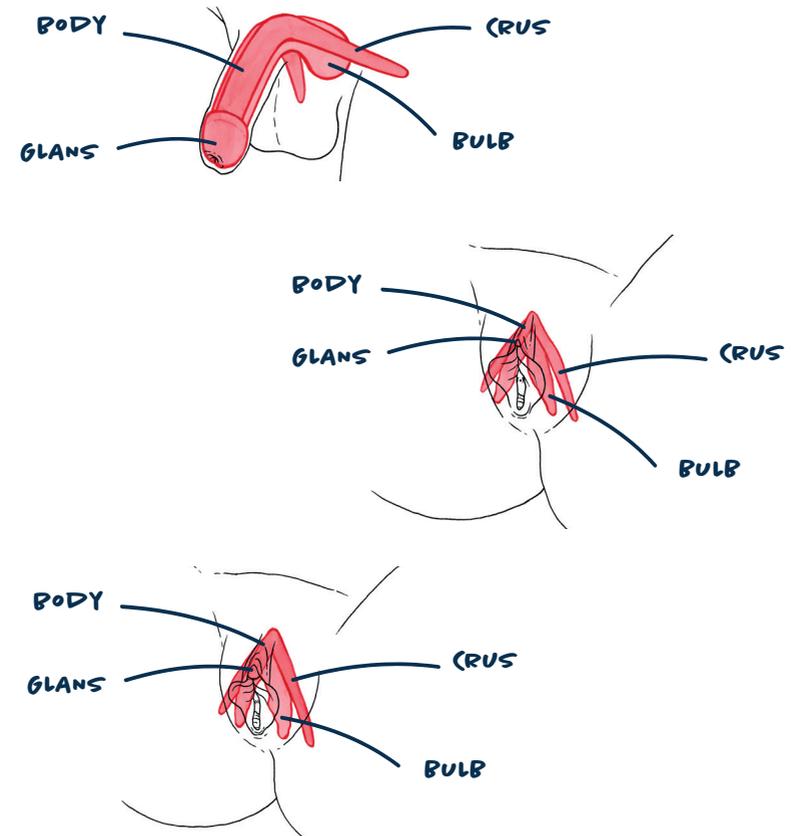
All genitals are made with the same parts, they are just organized a bit differently. Inside it's all the same. They are made of similar tissue, with lots of little cavities, which look a bit like a sponge. We call these the erectile organs : the clitoris, the penis, the dicklit and all their variants. The blood which rushes through will fill all the small cavities, make them swell and make the organs grow bigger and harder : that's an erection. Arousal also makes your glans more sensitive to touch and your labia or scrotum may change color and swell. Because all of these organs are very similar, they react in a similar way. The erection is not only for penises, everybody can have a boner! You can compare the penis and the clitoris in p. 16-17 of the [Sexesss brochure](#).



Sexesss brochure

## ERECTILE TISSUES

Whether you were born with a penis, a vulva or organs in between those two typical shapes, before your birth, your genitalia had a groove. If it closed under the effect of testosterone, you have one bulb. If it stayed open, you have two. However, genitalia all work in the same way.

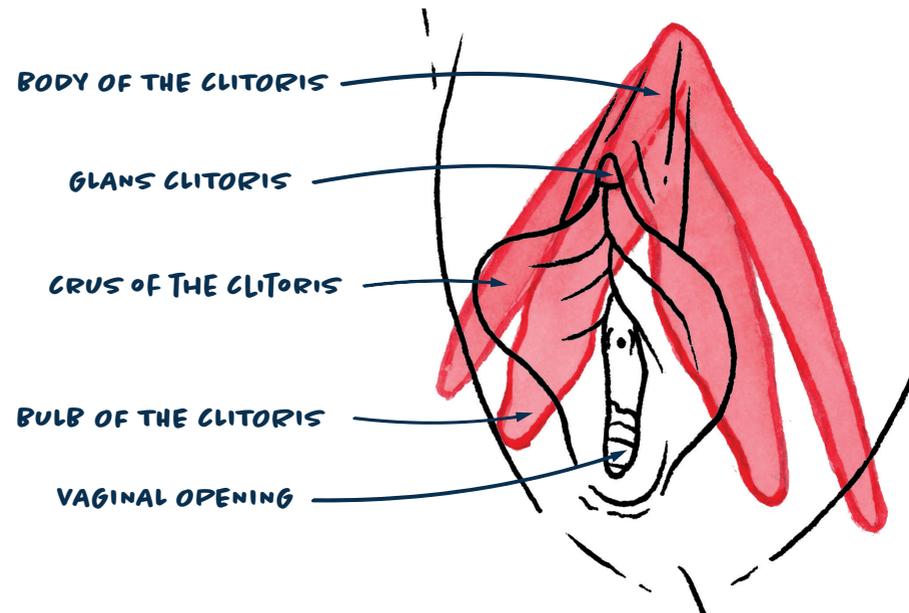


INTERNAL PARTS OF THE PENIS, CLITORIS AND DICKLIT

## THE ERECTION OF THE CLITORIS

The clitoris or dicklit is the erectile organ of the vulva and is the only organ in the human body whose sole known function is pleasure. For a long time it was represented by a small dot, or not represented at all, but it's actually much bigger. Indeed, most of the clitoris is internal. It sits on top and surrounds the vagina : there are the crura and the bulbs of the clitoris. The visible part between your labia (the glans and sometimes body) varies in size from person to person.

When we masturbate or during sexual intercourse, the clitoris and the dicklit can be stimulated from the inside or the outside. Regardless of which area is stimulated, an orgasm can be induced. Even in situations where the vulva or the clitoris have been modified, after surgeries or FGM for example, the majority of the clitoris remains. Pleasure is therefore totally possible!



## GOOD TO KNOW

This drawing of the clitoris is the actual size (even though it can vary from person to person).

## YOUR QUESTION

*I can't manage to have a vaginal orgasm, is it normal?  
I don't feel anything when I finger myself, what shall I do?*

## OUR ANSWER

*For the vagina and vulva, it's mostly the clitoris which is dedicated to pleasure, even though other parts can be sensitive. Biologically, the vagina has less nerve endings than the clitoris. As you can see on the drawing, the bulbs of the clitoris overlap the vaginal wall. The clitoris can therefore be stimulated through penetration, but the access is less direct than when it's stimulated externally around the glans, which is very sensitive to the touch. By the way, a lot of people have more pleasure when the clitoris is stimulated from the outside rather than through penetration. Everyone can discover what is best for them.*

## THE ERECTION OF THE PENIS

For the penis (and all its variations) it's the same! It also has internal parts, even though most people don't know that. We sometimes call them the roots of the penis, but they are actually the crura and the bulb of the penis (see p. 41). The blood rush induced by arousal makes the scrotum swell and the penis becomes erect. When it's erect, depending on the person, the penis can be curved, pressed against the belly, hold itself horizontally or point toward the ground.

Sometimes, you get an erection even though you don't feel any particular desire or you're not feeling any pleasure. It happens for example during the night or in the morning, but it can also happen when you need to urinate, sometimes when you feel strong emotions or even when nothing is happening, like at a bus stop.

## HINTS AND TIPS

In these cases, if you are in public and your erection shows, do not panic! You can try to wedge your penis between your stomach and your belt to make it less visible. You can also try to concentrate on something else (for example, review all of the dates you just learned in history class). Drastic method: just like for hiccups, you can drink a glass of water upside down or stop breathing for 30 seconds (yes, yes, it works!). If you are taking a hormonal treatment to delay puberty or medication that blocks testosterone, they can diminish spontaneous erections.



- It's cool being able to study together - For sure !

## YOUR QUESTION

Is it normal that I have a boner (my penis is hard all the time) at school, at home, everywhere?

## OUR ANSWER

It's completely normal to have frequent erections during adolescence, even though you don't necessarily know why or feel any desire at that moment. It's something that will balance itself out slowly, so don't worry (however, if it comes with pain, we encourage you to seek help from a health professional).

# WHEN YOU GET WET...

When we're turned on, we secrete different fluids which vary in quantity, depending on the individual and the situation. Sometimes there is so little that it's barely noticeable, and sometimes so much that it drips. Since all genitalia have the same origins, they look similar and function in the same way. For example, we all have a pair of small glands that produce secretions when we are aroused, which lubricate our genitalia. You can see these glands on p. 16-17 of the [Sexesss brochure](#) or on these [anatomical drawings](#). If you have a penis, these secretions are likely to contain spermatozoa (unless you are taking testosterone blockers or estrogens). We call it the pre-ejaculate liquid or pre-seminal fluid.

If you were born with a vagina, when you're turned on, in addition to those produced by the glands, there are three more types of secretions. The first one, usually called vaginal lubrication, 'sweats' through the thin membrane which lines the vagina. The two others, female ejaculation and squirting, are often but not always related to orgasms. You can learn more about how a vulva gets wet on this [Sexplanation video](#). Lubrication can vary from person to person and can depend on hydration or medical treatments such as the contraceptive pill. If you are taking testosterone, it's possible that you will produce less natural lubrication. In any case, it's often more comfortable to use lubricant, whether to have intercourse or just to use by yourself. You can use saliva or find information to discover which lubricant is best adapted for you on this [Scarleteen article](#).



Sexesss brochure



Anatomical drawings



Sexplanation video



Scarleteen article

## DID YOU KNOW?

People often mix up female ejaculation and squirting. In reality, female ejaculation amounts to a small drop of fluid secreted by the *paravrethral glands* (cousins of the prostate), which are made up of very small canals around the urethra. Squirting comes from the bladder. It can fill from a tablespoon all the way up to a small glass.



- I think we used too much lube.

Don't forget that when you have intercourse with penetration, you are advised to use a condom. You can only stop using them once you've been tested and if you use another form of contraception (or if a pregnancy is desired or not a possibility). Don't hesitate to inform yourself on [condom sizes](#) and [protected sex](#).



Condom sizes



Protected sex

# WHEN YOU LIKE IT



- Did you cum? - Erm... I thought I did...

Arousal can intensify if for example you engage in a desired sexual act, alone or with a partner. Your nipples harden, your testicles or uterus ascend, your glans becomes more sensitive, your blood pressure and heartbeat increase, your muscles tense up, you breathe faster and louder, you can make noises, and have the sensation of losing your mind. All of this is normal!

Sexual pleasure is not only limited to the biological reactions of your body when you feel desire or arousal. It is influenced by a lot of things, such as your mood, fantasies, beliefs, self-confidence, well-being or the closeness and trust that you have with your partner. It's important to listen to yourself and how you feel.

Your level of arousal depends on your gas pedal and your brake. If you are thinking about your math test or if you're stressed, it activates the brake, and your arousal may decrease. It can also happen without warning! If, on the other hand, you have more and more pleasure and arousal keeps increasing, and at some point you release the brake, you may have an orgasm.

## THE ORGASM

Whatever the shape of your genitalia, an orgasm can happen after just a few seconds, a few minutes, a lot more, or not happen at all.

The orgasm is born in the brain and affects the whole body. You can have an intense feeling of pleasure, a relaxing sensation and a temporarily altered state of consciousness. The muscles around your genital organs contract rhythmically and your genitals ejaculate varying amounts of fluids (that can happen without orgasm as well).

If you have a penis, you ejaculate semen. The quantity of semen varies from person to person and moment to moment. It can be from only a few drops to a teaspoonful. If you are taking a hormonal treatment that blocks testosterone or is estrogen-based, there is often a reduction in the quantity of semen. This however does not prevent you from orgasming. Semen is usually somewhat translucent or off-white, it can be more or less thick, and even contain little lumps. Semen can also contain a bit of blood sometimes, but in most cases it's not alarming and goes away in a few days. If it doesn't, it's better to seek medical help.

When you don't ejaculate, spermatozoa remain in the testicles. Their lifespan is about 30 days, until they die and are flushed out – therefore, there is no risk of accumulating too many!

There are many ways to have an orgasm, and not all are related to genitals. For example, you can have an orgasm from stimulation of the nipples, ears or whilst sleeping.

When you feel sexual pleasure or have an orgasm, signals are released in your body. They can have a number of positive effects on you, such as making you feel joy, well-being, motivation or attachment towards the person you're with.

But sometimes, it doesn't feel like a happy party in your mind. You may cry or feel sad, depressed or ashamed in the hour after sexual arousal or orgasm, even if everything went well. In that case, listen to yourself. It may be that you need to distance yourself until you feel better, or to seek comfort. It's also something you can talk to a professional about if you want to.

## THE FORGOTTEN ONES...

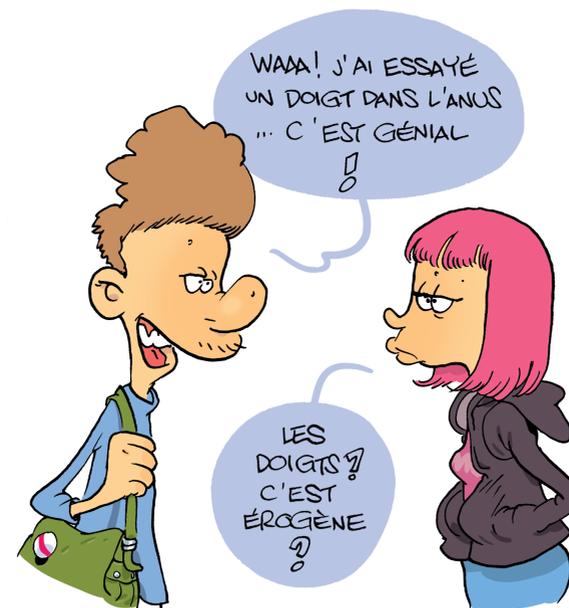
The anus is also a very sensitive area, very close to the erectile body of the penis or the clitoris. The stimulation of that area can give you pleasure, no matter your sex or sexual and romantic orientation. However, the anus doesn't lubricate naturally, so you may use lubricant, whilst making sure to choose one which is compatible with condoms.

If you have a penis, your prostate is a gland which secretes a part of what makes up semen. It's just under the bladder, in front of the rectum and above the penis bulb and it surrounds the urethra. It is an organ which, when stimulated by massaging the area situated between the testicles and the anus, or through penetration, can lead to pleasure and orgasms.

You can check out the internal anatomy of your genitalia and find the prostate on these [anatomical charts](#):



Anatomical charts



- Wow! I tried putting a finger in my anus... It's awesome! - Fingers? They're erogenous?

## YOUR QUESTIONS

*I am attracted to girls but I like to put stuff in my butt, am I gay?*

*Can women feel anal pleasure?*

## OUR ANSWER

*Everybody has an anus. It is a sensitive area which can give pleasure. Anal pleasure therefore doesn't have anything to do with your genitalia, gender identity or romantic and/or sexual orientation.*

## BEING TURNED-ON DOESN'T MEAN CONSENT

We have seen that our genitalia, body and brain react in all sorts of ways to pleasure, and many of these reactions cannot be controlled voluntarily. Therefore, you may be aroused and have an erection, or get wet, but not want to have sex, or on the contrary, have desire but not feel any sexual arousal. On the other hand, what you choose to do with your body ALWAYS involves an active decision, which has to be consensual if you are with someone else (and even by yourself!). The only way to make sure that someone is on the same page is to ask them.

But what exactly is consent?

I CONSENT  
YOU CONSENT  
THEY CONSENT

# SEXUAL CONSENT EXPRESSES ITSELF IN SEVERAL WAYS WHICH HAVE TO BE PRESENT AT EVERY INSTANT



1. Consent is **enthusiastic**. There has to be mutual desire. If your partner expresses a lack of desire or doesn't look very enthusiastic, then don't insist. To concede is not to consent. Saying no has to be an option without consequences, and which should not lead to threats and emotional blackmail, etc. Otherwise, it becomes a form of pressure.
2. Consent is **free and conscious**. We cannot be sure if a sleeping person, someone under the influence of drugs or even someone that has drunk too much has given their consent. Everybody has to be in full command of their mental faculties to have a consensual relation. If in doubt, it's always better to wait until the day after.
3. Consent is **specific**. It's not because we consent to a certain sexual activity that we consent to all of them. For example: it's not because we consent to kiss someone that we consent to have sex with that person or others. It is important to make sure every step of the way that your partner is comfortable and wants to go further. It's also a good thing to ask yourself the same question, to know if you want to go further.

4. Consent is **reversible**. At any moment, you or your partner can change their mind. If eventually you don't really want to keep going, it's ok. We never have to go further. Sometimes, it can be a bit awkward and we can't find the words. In these cases, you can say for example, 'Wait a second, I need a break'.

5. Consent is **informed**. If one of the two people knows that the sexual relation may present a risk of infection, sexually transmitted disease, or pregnancy, it is important to inform the other person. On this note, if you want to have protected sex and the sexual relation is unprotected, there is no consent.

### A FEW SUGGESTED PHRASES TO MAKE SURE OF THE OTHER'S CONSENT...

Asking them what they feel like doing.

Say, 'I want to kiss you' and wait for their reaction.

Ask them if you can, 'Can I take off your shirt?'

'How are you feeling?' 'Do you like...?'

'Can we talk about...?' 'Do you want to keep going?'

'Do you want to slow down/take a break?' 'What do you feel like doing?'

These are questions you can also ask yourself; it's important to stay attentive to how you feel and what you want.

### HOW TO SAY THAT YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE?

'Wait, I need to take a break.', 'That's hurting me.' 'It's going a bit too fast for me.', 'I don't want to do that. I'd much rather do...'

## WHEN THERE IS NO CONSENT...

During or after an assault, you can be in a state of shock and can't necessarily react. Not everything is necessarily very clear, you can have a hard time realizing the gravity of what happened and feel ashamed or guilty ("I should have done something differently", "it's my fault, I did this or that", "at first I wanted it"). It's also possible you don't know what to do. One thing is certain: it is never your fault.

One of the first things that may help you is to talk to someone you trust (a friend or family member, a doctor or another professional). In the US, you can call or contact the [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#). The people on the phone will be able to give you free support (it can be just listening, advising, putting you in contact with health professionals in your area or with a juridical assistance). These people will also be able to help you define with words what happened to you.

### IMPORTANT

If you would like to be helped (medically and psychologically) and have a medical statement completed, it is best to go to the emergency room as soon as possible. It's always a good idea to do this just in case, and you can of course be accompanied (by a friend or a family member). It's also better not to wash yourself, in order for the doctor to gather samples and a maximum of evidence.



National Sexual  
Assault Hotline

## MY FRIEND WAS A VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT, HOW CAN I HELP?

The first thing to do is to listen to your friend and not question their testimony, and to let them know that you are there for them. It is possible that your friend won't react as you wish they would or how you would. It is important to respect that choice and not to insist. You can say for example: "I'm glad you told me. I believe you. Whatever your decision may be, I support you". Then, you can encourage them to speak to an adult they trust. This is very important so that your friend can receive the support they need. You can give them the [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) number, for professionals to take over.

# LITTLE HANDBOOK OF MAINTENANCE



National Sexual  
Assault Hotline

# HOW TO WASH AND TAKE CARE OF YOUR GENITALS



- I use the showerhead - Hygiene and pleasure all-in-one! - Smart.

## IF YOU HAVE A VULVA

The vagina is a self-cleaning organ. Glands around the cervix and vagina produce secretions which will clean everything as they move. This is the discharge that you will find in your panties. Having vaginal discharge is a sign that everything works fine, so you don't necessarily need to use panty liners. These secretions are translucent, white or pale yellow, and vary from person to person and throughout the menstrual cycle. To wash your vulva, you just need to use water and gently clean without going into the vagina. Soap is unnecessary and may disturb your vaginal flora, possibly increasing the risk of certain infections. Don't use products dedicated to intimate hygiene unless prescribed by a doctor. Same thing goes for scented wipes, which should be banned forever (good riddance!). To avoid problems, when you wipe in the bathroom it's important to do it from front to back when possible, in order to not spread bacteria from the anus to the vulva. After having sex it's important to urinate, to prevent certain infections. Wearing cotton underwear is recommended to avoid problems such as yeast infections, and to not wear any while sleeping. In case of discomfort, wearing looser underwear may help: genitals do not like to be squished.

## IF YOU HAVE A PENIS

To wash, if you're not circumcised, you need to pull back the foreskin to clean the glans well up to its base, where small glands create a fluid which builds up and creates an unpleasant smell, smegma. Do this gently with water and a mild soap. Dry yourself well after showering (without rubbing)!

## YOUR QUESTION

*At the end of the day I always have white and viscous discharge, is it normal or not?*

## OUR ANSWER

*It's completely normal to have vaginal discharge, which can vary depending on your menstrual cycle. If you notice a change in the discharge (color, smell, quantity) or you feel a burning sensation, an itch or an irritation in the vulva area, we advise you to seek help from a health professional.*

## DO I HAVE TO REMOVE MY HAIRS?

Your hair changes under the effect of hormones at puberty, and it grows, amongst other areas, on your genitals. These hairs can be of different thicknesses, colors and shapes depending on the individual. There are lots of theories about the biological reason for their existence, such as protecting the skin from chafing or infections, offering a protective pad during intercourse, or regulating temperature. You are free to decide if you'd like to keep them or not, there is no rule.

# WHEN SHOULD I SEE A DOCTOR?

We often think that we must have a problem, or be sexually active, to see a doctor. To get to know your body well, what is relevant for your health and ask all of the questions you may have, we advise you to seek the help of a health professional as soon as you start puberty (pediatrician, family doctor, gynecologist, urologist or sexual health specialist, who you can find in Planned Parenthood associations, or in certain school nursing stations). You can find professionals through [sexual health centres](#). If you have issues or problems, such as pain, itching, irritations or wounds, or if you notice some changes, don't hesitate to seek help, it's always a good idea.

## GOOD TO KNOW

You don't necessarily need to get undressed or undergo a physical exam at a medical appointment, even a gynecological one. You can discuss that with the person that you're going to see. Sometimes it's necessary for medical reasons, but medical centers are no exception to the rule: your body, your choice. If you don't feel at ease, you can simply say "I don't want to get undressed" or "I do not want to proceed with a vaginal examination". Expressing clearly what you feel helps adults around you to understand and respect your wishes.



Sexual health centres

If you are planning on having sex, it is important for you to seek the help of a health professional to discuss contraception or other needs (such as health screening for example).

You can find Health Centers through the [Planned Parenthood](#) organization.

If you are intersex you can get help finding healthcare professionals by contacting [InterAdvocates](#) or [InterConnect](#).

If you are trans\* organisations such as the [Trevor Project](#), the [LGBT National Help Center](#) or [Gender Spectrum](#) can guide you to access appropriate healthcare.



Planned Parenthood



InterAdvocates



InterConnect



Trevor Project



LGBT National  
help center



Gender spectrum



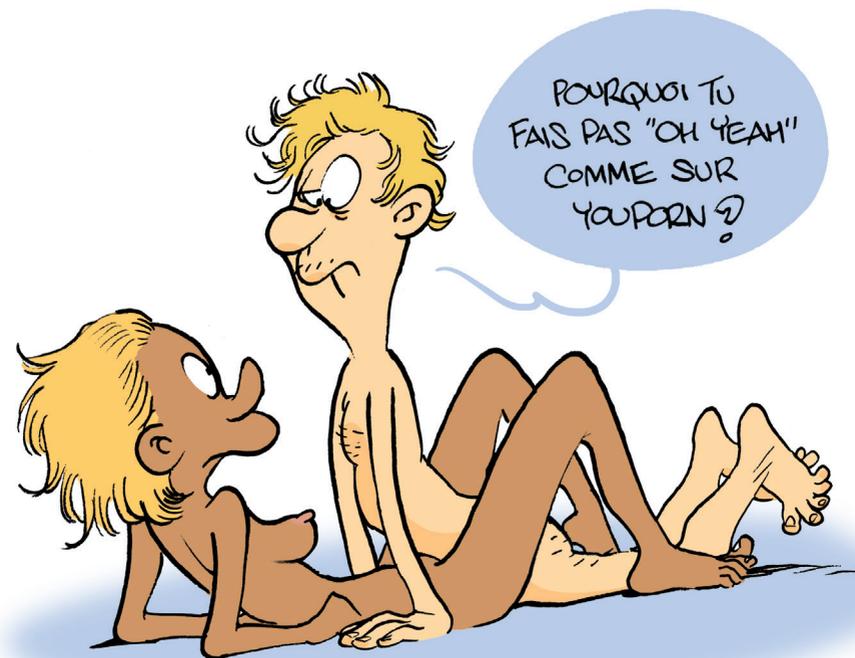
YOUR BODY,  
YOUR  
SEXUALITY,  
YOUR CHOICE!

## CONCLUSION: YOUR SEXUALITY BELONGS TO YOU

No matter your age, genitalia, gender or sexual and romantic attraction, the most important thing is to never forget that your body and sexuality belong to you. You have rights that protect you. If you have a feeling that your sexuality is not 'normal', it's often because cultural objects which surround you (books, series, films, songs, etc.) are very often normative. This means that they often show you only one way to live your sexuality, which makes you believe that that is what's 'normal'.

In these norms, we usually find sexual relations which revolve around the penetration of a penis in a vagina (whilst we can also make love without that), heterosexual romantic relationships and between cisgender people (whilst many other sexual orientations and gender identities exist). These normative representations can make you feel abnormal, while in reality, there are as many ways of living your sexuality and romantic relationships as there are individuals. The only crucial point is that all the people involved are consenting and that if you don't want to do something, you should never feel forced to because 'that's how it should be done'. For example, if sexual intercourse is of no interest to you, and if you think it's more interesting to talk, it's completely ok. Maybe you don't like penetration, that's also completely ok.

Actually, it's simple. **The rule to remember is: your body, your choice.** Sexuality, contrary to what we may think, is not only 'biological'. It is also something we learn through discussion, by exploring ourselves and others. And this exploration goes on for life. Whatever your body is, what matters is that you feel good as a person.



*Why aren't you saying "Oh yeah" like on yourporn?*

# RESSOURCES

## Organisations :

[The Trevor Project](#)



[LGBT National Help Center](#)



[Gender Spectrum](#)



[InterAdvocates](#)



[InterConnect](#)



## To find a health center

[Planned Parenthood](#)



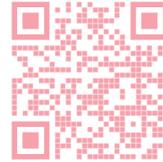
## For your parents

[Sex Positive Families](#)



## More resources on our website

[Sciences, Sexes, Identities](#)





*How does period blood pass through the hymen?*

*Has my penis stopped growing?*

*I have a very large clitoris, it's very visible whilst I was told in class that it's only as small as a pea?*

*I have big labia compared to people on websites, is it normal?*

*Is it weird that when I think about having sex I disgust myself?*

*If I feel attracted to someone, does it necessarily mean I'm in love?*

*Hi, is an orgasm felt the same way for men and women?*

*In Me, My Sex and I, you will find answers to these questions and others about your genitalia, body, gender, pleasure and consent*

\* SANTÉ SEXUELLE  
SEXUELLE GESUNDHE  
SALUTE SESSUALE  
GUIDE SCHWEIZ SVIZZERA

ÉPICÈNE  
Association d'intérêt public  
en faveur des personnes trans\*

InterAction  
Association Suisse pour les Intersexes

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