
Lesbian sexuality

Summary

- Being a lesbian is completely natural.
 - Some women enjoy lesbian experiences, but still consider themselves 'straight'.
 - It can take time to work out whether you are lesbian or not. Don't rush yourself to make a decision.
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Women usually question whether they are heterosexual ('straight') or lesbian (same-sex attracted) when they realise they are feeling attracted to other women. Lesbians usually say their main physical, emotional and sexual feelings are for women. Many women report they have lesbian experiences or feelings, but do not think of themselves as lesbians or gay.

Being a lesbian is completely natural

It is important to remember that:

- It is natural for people to be attracted to members of their own sex.
- It is normal and healthy to be a lesbian.

Why some women are lesbians

There is no real explanation as to why some women are lesbians and others are not – it is just a part of who we are. It may be a result of genetic influences or because of social experiences or a combination of the two.

Some people recognise their attractions at an early age, while others don't develop attractions until well into adulthood. Many young people begin to develop feelings and attractions for people of the same sex during their teenage years.

Knowing whether you're a lesbian

There is no questionnaire or test you can complete that will tell you whether you are lesbian or not. If you are a lesbian you may:

- feel attracted to other women
- feel you are different to your girlfriends or don't always 'fit in'
- feel confused because you're attracted to men as well as women.

These feelings can be difficult to cope with, but are all very normal. It can take time to work out how you feel about your sexuality. You should not be in a rush to work out what your sexuality is – it will develop over time. It's okay to feel unsure.

Knowing whether someone else is a lesbian

You probably won't know if a woman is gay until she tells you. There is no way you can tell whether a woman is a lesbian just by looking at her. The way people dress is about their personal identity, not their sexuality.

Telling people you are a lesbian

Before you decide to 'come out', you should consider who you will tell and what their reaction may be. Coming out can be a long process. Be prepared for both positive and negative reactions. For some people, coming out is a positive step. For others, it is an unnecessary complication.

Lesbian relationships

The major difference between lesbian and straight relationships is that there are two women, instead of a man and

a woman. Lesbian women fall in love and form committed relationships. Like all relationships, there will be both good and bad times. There are no rules you have to follow in lesbian relationships. Everyone is free to make up their own rules.

Becoming sexually active as a lesbian

Before you have sex, you should make sure that:

- you are ready to become sexually active – don't be forced into something that is not right for you
- both you and your partner trust and respect each other
- you are doing it safely – avoid contact with your partner's body fluids to reduce your risk of sexually transmitted disease.

You can practise safe sex by using dental dams if you are having oral sex. Dental dams are small sheets of latex rubber that act as a shield between the vagina and the mouth.

If you and your partner have had a **sexual health** test, are in a monogamous relationship and both agree to communicate if the boundaries of your relationship are going to change, you may decide not to use a dental dam.

Information about lesbian issues

You can get more information from:

- reputable websites – such as **Twenty10** or **ReachOut.com**
- gay and lesbian newspapers – every state has a gay and lesbian newspaper. This will tell you what is on and how to access support and social groups. You can also subscribe to national magazines.

Where to get help

- **Switchboard** Tel. **(03) 9663 2939** in Melbourne or **1800 184 527** for regional Victoria and Tasmania
- **Kids Helpline** Tel. **1800 55 1800** (24-hour telephone counselling service for young people aged 5–25)
- **Lifeline** Tel. **13 11 14** (24-hour counselling service)
- **QLife** – a national counselling and referral service for people of diverse sex, genders and sexualities Tel. **1800 184 527** or chat online between 3 pm and 12 am
- **Reachout.com**

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