Sexuality is diverse, and there are many different types. It can take time to figure out the sexuality that fits you best. And your sexuality can change over time.

Coming to terms with your sexuality can be a very liberating, exciting and positive experience.

Some people have a hard time accepting others who are different to themselves. If someone gives you a hard time about your sexuality, it's good to talk to someone about it. You don't need to deal with it by yourself.

Sexuality is not about who you have sex with, or how often you have it. Sexuality is about your sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions and behaviours towards other people. You can find other people physically, sexually or emotionally attractive, and all those things are a part of your sexuality.

Sexuality is diverse and personal, and it is an important part of who you are. Discovering your sexuality can be a very liberating, exciting and positive experience.

Some people experience discrimination due to their sexuality. If someone gives you a hard time about your sexuality, it’s good to talk to someone about it.

### Different types of sexuality

Sometimes, it can take time to figure out the sexuality that fits you best. And your sexuality can change over time. It can be confusing; so don’t worry if you are unsure.

You might be drawn to men or to women, to both or to neither. There is no right or wrong – it’s about what’s right for you. And while there are common terms to describe different types of sexuality, you don’t have to adopt a label to describe yourself.

#### Heterosexual and homosexual

Most people are attracted to the opposite sex – boys who like girls, and women who like men, for example. These people are heterosexual, or ‘straight’.

Some people are attracted to the same sex. These people are homosexual. Around 10 per cent of young Australians experience same-sex attraction, most during puberty.

‘Lesbian’ is the common term for people who identify as women and are same-sex attracted. ‘Gay’ is the most common term for people who identify as men and are same-sex attracted, although women identifying as lesbian also sometimes use this word.

The Better Health Channel has more information on lesbian sexuality and gay male sexuality.

#### Bisexual

Sexuality can be more complicated than being straight or gay. Some people are attracted to both men and women, and are known as bisexual.

Bisexual does not mean the attraction is evenly weighted – a person may have stronger feelings for one gender than another. And this can vary depending on who they meet.

There are different kinds of bisexuality. Some people who are attracted to men and women still consider themselves to be mainly straight or gay. Or they might have sexual feelings towards both genders but only have intercourse with one.

Other people see sexual attraction as more grey than black and white. These people find everyday labels too rigid. Some prefer to identify as ‘queer’. And others use the term ‘pan’, or ‘pansexual’, to show they are attracted to different kinds of people no matter what their gender, identity or expression.

There are many differences between individuals, so bisexuality is a general term only. You can read more about it at the Better Health Channel’s page on bisexuality.

#### Asexual

A person who identifies as asexual (‘ace’ for short) is someone who does not experience, or experiences very little, sexual attraction.

Asexuality is not a choice, like abstinence (where someone chooses not to have sex with anyone, whether they are attracted to them or not). Asexuality is a sexual orientation, like homosexuality or heterosexuality.

Some people may strongly identify with being asexual, except for a few infrequent experiences of sexual attraction (grey-asexuality). Some people feel sexual attraction only after they develop a strong emotional bond with someone (this is known as demisexuality). Other people experience asexuality in a range of other ways.

#### Discrimination based on sexuality

Equality and freedom from discrimination are fundamental human rights that belong to all people.

In most states in Australia, including Victoria, it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or lawful sexual activity. However, discrimination can still occur.

If you think you have been discriminated against or victimised because of your sexuality (or a range of other reasons) contact the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.
For information on the legal obligations of employers regarding discrimination based on sexual identity, see the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission webpage on [equal opportunity practice guidelines](#).

Better Health Channel has more information about [gay and lesbian discrimination](#).

**Sexuality and mental health**

LGBTI people have an increased risk of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, homelessness, self-harming and suicidal thoughts, compared with the general population. This is particularly true of young LGBTI people who are coming to terms with their sexuality and experiencing victimisation and bullying at school.

Some of the stressful experiences that can affect the mental health of an LGBTI person are:

- feeling different from other people
- being bullied (verbally or physically)
- feeling pressure to deny or change their sexuality
- feeling worried about coming out, and then being rejected or isolated
- feeling unsupported or misunderstood.

These pressures are on top of all the other stuff people have to deal with in life such as managing school, finding a job, forming relationships and making sense of your identity and place in the world.

**Helping someone struggling with their sexuality and mental health**

If you are worried that someone you know has a mental health problem, look out for changes in their mood, behaviour, relationships, appetite, sleep patterns, coping and thinking. If these changes last more than a couple of weeks, talk to them about getting help. A good place to start is their doctor, or a phone or online service such as [QLife](#), [beyondblue](#) or [eheadspace](#) (for young people).

If you are struggling with your own sexuality:

- Get support if you’re finding it hard to cope. Try talking to someone you trust – a friend, relative, doctor or counsellor, or use a helpline such as [QLife](#), [beyondblue](#) or [eheadspace](#).
- Don’t hang around someone if they are abusive to you.
- Remember, there is no rush to figure out your sexuality. Take your time. And don’t feel pressured to put a label on it.
- If you think you’re gay but you don’t want to ‘come out’, it’s okay. If you want, you can read more about [coming out](#).

**Where to get help**

For information about your rights:

- [Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission](#)

If you want to talk to someone, chat online, or find out more about LGBTI issues:

- [QLife](#) (counselling and referral service for LGBTI people) – Tel. 1800 184 527
- [headspace](#) (mental health service for ages 12–25) – Tel. 1800 650 890
- [ReachOut](#) (youth mental health service)
- [beyondblue](#) (for anyone feeling depressed or anxious) – Tel. 1300 22 4636, and [Youthbeyondblue](#)
- [Lifeline](#) (support for anyone having a personal crisis) – Tel. 13 11 14
- [Kids Helpline](#) Tel. 1800 55 1800
- [Switchboard](#) Tel. 1800 184 527 (telephone counselling, information and referrals)
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) Tel. 1300 659 467 (for anyone thinking about suicide)

You may also be interested in visiting these sites:

- ACON (for LGBTI health and HIV prevention and support)
- [PFLAG Victoria](#) (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)

**References**

- [A parent’s guide to their child’s sexuality](#), headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation, Department of Health, Australian Government.
- All about being gay, ReachOut, Australia.
- Factors affecting LGBTI people, Beyond Blue, Australia.
- A language guide: trans and gender diverse inclusion, 2017, ACON.
- The difference between sex, sexuality and gender, ReachOut, Australia.
- Transgender and transsexuality, Youth Central.
- Understanding your sexuality, ReachOut, Australia.
- What does it mean to be average?, 2017, Minma18.
- [Sexuality](#), 2017, Jean Hailes for Women’s Health.

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More information

Sexual health

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active
Sexual health basics

- **Contraception - condoms for men**
  Condoms are the most effective way to reduce your risk of contracting a sexually transmissible infection (STI) during sex...

- **Contraception - condoms for women**
  The female condom is effective in preventing an unplanned pregnancy and protecting against sexually transmissible infections (STIs)...

- **Contraception - choices**
  The method of contraception you choose will depend on your general health, lifestyle and relationships...

- **Contraception - emergency contraception**
  It is best to take emergency contraception as soon as possible, ideally within 24 hours of having unprotected sex, but it still works well within 96 hours (four days)...  

- **Masturbation**
  Masturbation is a normal and healthy way for people to explore their own bodies...

- **Oral sex**
  Oral sex is using your mouth, lips or tongue to stimulate your partner’s genitals or anus. Both men and women can give and receive oral sex...

- **Safe sex**
  Safe sex is sexual contact that doesn’t involve the exchange of semen, vaginal fluids or blood between partners...

- **Sex – are you ready**
  It is normal to have mixed feelings about having sex with someone else...

- **Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)**
  It is not difficult to avoid catching sexually transmitted infections (STIs)...

- **Women’s sexual and reproductive health (video)**
  Find out some facts about women’s sexual and reproductive health - including fertility, contraception, menopause, parental consent and conditions (such as PCOS and endometriosis)...

Sexual relationships

- **Partying safely and sex**
  Partying is fun but being out of it on alcohol or drugs can put you at risk of unwanted or unsafe sex...

- **Safe sex**
  Safe sex is sexual contact that doesn’t involve the exchange of semen, vaginal fluids or blood between partners...

- **Sex – are you ready**
  It is normal to have mixed feelings about having sex with someone else...

- **Time to immunise - free vaccines for men who have sex with men**
  Immunisation is one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others from infectious diseases in our community. In partnership with Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council), the...

- **Women’s sexual and reproductive health (video)**
  Find out some facts about women’s sexual and reproductive health - including fertility, contraception, menopause, parental consent and conditions (such as PCOS and endometriosis)...

Sexuality and sexual identity

- **Bisexuality**
  Bisexuality is when a person finds men and women physically, sexually or emotionally attractive...
Family violence and the LGBTIQ communities

Within Australia, intimate partner violence is the most common form of family violence. Evidence presented to the Royal Commission into Family Violence suggests intimate partner violence is as...

Gay male sexuality

There is no real explanation as to why some men are gay and others are not; it is just part of the wide variety of human sexuality...

Lesbian sexuality

Many women report they have lesbian experiences or feelings, but do not think of themselves as lesbians...

Men and sexuality

Sexuality is not about whom we have sex with, or how often we have it. Sexuality is about our sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions and behaviours towards other people. We can find other people...

Mental health and wellbeing support for LGBTI people

If you or someone you know requires support from an LGBTI or mental health organisation there are services available...

Sexuality explained

Sexuality is not about whom we have sex with, or how often we have it. Sexuality is about our sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions and behaviours towards other people. We can find other people...

Switchboard (Victoria)

The Gay and Lesbian Switchboard (Victoria) is a telephone helpline that gives advice, information, counselling and referrals to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) people in...

Trans and gender diverse people

Your gender is what feels natural to you, even if it is different from your biological sex. Some people may not feel comfortable with their biological sex but choose to live with the gender with which...

Women and sexuality

Most girls start puberty around 10 years old, but it can be earlier or later than that. Your body will go through big changes as you change from a girl into a young woman. For some girls (and women...

Sex education

Sex education - tips for parents

Mothers are more likely to talk about intimate, emotional and psychological aspects of sex than fathers...

Talking to children with cognitive disability about sex

All people, including those with cognitive disabilities, have the right to explore and express their sexuality in appropriate ways...

Talking to pre-schoolers about sex

By four, most children are curious about certain sexual issues, and they need honest answers to their questions...

Talking to primary school children about sex

Some parents find it hard to talk with their primary age children about sex, but help is available...

Talking to young people about sex

Talking about sex with your child is easier if you start when your child is younger...

Talking to young people with cognitive disabilities about sex

Young people with cognitive disabilities have the same range of sexual feelings and desires as young people without disabilities...

Women's sexual and reproductive health (video)

Find out some facts about women's sexual and reproductive health - including fertility, contraception, menopause, parental consent and conditions (such as PCOS and endometriosis)...

Sexual assault and abuse

Date rape

Date rape can be especially common among young people who have had little sexual experience and aren't sure that what they have experienced crosses the line into rape. Many victims of date rape can...

People with a disability who experience violence, abuse or neglect

People with a disability who experience violence, abuse or neglect can seek help from a range of services specifically designed to help them...

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Recognising when a child is at risk

Too many children are physically, sexually and emotionally abused and when this happens, it is up to adults to speak up.

Sexual abuse

If you suspect sexual abuse or have been told about it by a child, you must report it.

Sexual abuse - helping your child

As a parent, you have an important role in helping your child recover from sexual abuse.

Sexual assault

Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual behaviour or activity that makes the victim feel uncomfortable, frightened or threatened.

Contraception and abortion

Abortion

All women should have access to accurate information about abortion so they can make their own informed decisions.

Abortion procedures - medication

Mifepristone, also called RU486 or the 'abortion pill', is used to terminate (end) a pregnancy up to nine weeks.

Abortion procedures - surgical

Abortion is one of the most common and safest types of surgery in Australia.

Contraception after an abortion

Whether you have a surgical or medical abortion you can become fertile again very soon after the abortion, so it's important to start using contraception immediately if you wish to prevent any pregnancy.

Contraception after giving birth

After having a baby, you need to choose an effective method of contraception if you don't want to have another baby straight away.

Contraception - choices

The method of contraception you choose will depend on your general health, lifestyle and relationships.

Contraception - condoms for men

Condoms are the most effective way to reduce your risk of contracting a sexually transmissible infection (STI) during sex.

Contraception - condoms for women

The female condom is effective in preventing an unplanned pregnancy and protecting against sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

Contraception - diaphragms

The diaphragm acts as a barrier method of contraception.

Contraception - emergency contraception

It is best to take emergency contraception as soon as possible, ideally within 24 hours of having unprotected sex, but it still works well within 96 hours (four days).

Contraception - injections for men

Contraceptive injections for men are not yet available in Australia, but clinical studies suggest that they may provide a safe, effective and reversible method of male contraception in the future.

Contraception - intrauterine devices (IUD)

An intrauterine device (IUD) is a small contraceptive device that is put into the uterus (womb) to prevent pregnancy.

Contraception - the combined pill

The two types of oral contraception available in Australia are the combined pill, known as the Pill, and the mini pill.

Contraception - the mini pill

The two types of oral contraception available in Australia are the combined pill, known as "the Pill", and the mini pill.

Contraception - tubal ligation

Sterilisation is a permanent method of contraception that a woman can choose if she is sure that she does not want children in the future.
- Contraception - vaginal ring
  The vaginal ring works in a similar way to the oral contraceptive pill to prevent pregnancy.

- Contraception - vasectomy
  Having a vasectomy does not affect a man’s ability to produce male sex hormones, enjoy sex or reach orgasm.

- Pregnancy - unplanned
  When a woman does not want to become a parent, her pregnancy options may include abortion or adoption.

### Sexual issues throughout life

- Cognitive disability and sexuality
  People with intellectual disability can express their sexuality in satisfying ways.

- Menopause and sexual issues
  Menopause, the final menstrual period, is a natural event that marks the end of a woman’s reproductive years.

- Physical disability and sexuality
  Sexuality is a key part of human nature. Expressing sexuality in satisfying ways is important for everyone, including people with a disability. Some people with disability may need additional support.

- Puberty
  Adjusting to the many changes that happen around puberty can be difficult for both parents and young people.

- Sex and chronic illness
  Sexuality is a key part of human nature. Expressing sexuality in satisfying ways is important for everyone, including people with a disability. Some people with disability may need additional support.

### Health conditions and sexual issues

- Brain injury and sexual issues
  A brain injury can change the way a person experiences and expresses their sexuality.

- Cognitive disability and sexuality
  People with intellectual disability can express their sexuality in satisfying ways.

- Diabetes and erectile dysfunction
  Men with diabetes are more prone to problems with erectile dysfunction or impotence.

- HIV and men - safer sex
  HIV transmission can occur from men to women and from women to men as well as between men who have sex with men.

- HIV and women – having children
  Women living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or women whose partner is HIV-positive, may wish to have children but feel concerned about the risk of transmission of the virus to themselves if...

- HIV and women – safer sex
  Practising safe sex is important, whether your partner is HIV-positive or not.

- Parkinson’s disease and sexual issues
  Communication is the best remedy for all types of relationship problems, including sexual problems caused by Parkinson’s disease.

- Physical disability and sexuality
  Sexuality is a key part of human nature. Expressing sexuality in satisfying ways is important for everyone, including people with a disability. Some people with disability may need additional support.

- Sex and chronic illness
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**Support Groups**

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Support for LGBTI people

LGBTI people are frequently subject to discrimination and can have problems accessing healthcare that's right for them. If you or someone you know is LGBTI and needs support, help is available.

Mental health and wellbeing support for LGBTI people

NURSE-ON-CALL

Provides immediate, expert health advice from a registered nurse. Call 1300 60 60 24