

Inclusive and Expansive Language about Bodies

Using inclusive/expansive language can be a powerful tool in validating someone's lived experience and potentially improving their health outcomes*

Exclusionary // Limited	Inclusive // Expansive
Avoid	Use
Vaginally assaulted	Penetrated (in the genitals)
Vulva, labia	Outer folds, external genitals
Vagina	Internal genitals, front genital opening
Speculum exam	Internal part of the exam
Breasts	Chest
Breast feeding	Chest feeding, nursing
Period	Monthly bleeding, people who menstruate
Feminine hygiene products	Menstrual products
Penis	External genitals, front genitals
Sex change surgery	Gender affirming surgery, Gender confirmation surgery
Pregnant women	Pregnant people/person, birthing people
Women needing emergency contraception	Person capable of becoming pregnant, people with a uterus
Bra, panties, boxers	Underwear

Gender and Sexual Orientation*

Assigned Sex at Birth: The sex (male or female) assigned to a newborn based on their anatomy. May be referred to as birth sex, natal sex, biological sex or sex. Use *assigned female* and *assigned male* instead of biological female and biological male.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity is the same as their assigned sex at birth. Use instead of normal, real or not trans.

Gay, Lesbian and Queer: Commonly used words to describe an individual's sexual orientation.

Gender Diverse: An umbrella term describing an “ever-evolving array of labels” that individuals may use when their gender identity, expression or perception does not conform to society's expectations.

Specific Gender Identity Terms

Genderqueer: Refers to an individual whose gender identity falls outside the traditional gender binary. Other terms to describe this identity include gender variant, gender expansive, agender and gender creative.

Gender Minority: Describes individuals whose gender identity or gender expression differs from their assigned sex at birth. For some, this term may be preferable to gender nonconforming or others.

Gender Nonconforming: Describes an individual whose gender expression differs from society's expectations for males and females.

Nonbinary: Describes individuals who do not identify as a man or woman.

Third Gender: Category of individuals who choose to identify as neither of the two traditional genders, both or a combination of the two.

Transgender (abbrev. trans): Describes an individual whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth, usually used when gender diverse traits are “persistent, consistent and insistent” over time. It is also used as a categorical term for gender identities other than male and female.

Two-Spirit: Refers to the historical and current First Nations people whose individual spirits blend female and male spirits. Used by Native American LGBTQ communities as an alternative term to gay, lesbian or transgender that honors their heritage.

Gender Dysphoria: Psychological distress that individuals whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex may experience. It can result in significant difficulty functioning in social, occupational and other settings.

Gender Expression: How an individual appears, dresses, speaks and behaves (e.g., a feminine gender expression).

Gender Identity: An individual's personal sense of being a man, woman, both, neither or another gender.

Intersex: An umbrella term for the variety of physical conditions in which the sexual or reproductive anatomy an individual is born with is not exclusively male or female. Often, anatomy for both or either sexes appears later in physical development of the individual.

LGBTQ: Acronym referring to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities, as well as those who are questioning.

QPOC/QTPOC: Refers to queer people of color and queer and transgender people of color, respectively.

Queer: An umbrella term sometimes used to describe individuals who consider their gender identity or sexual orientation as outside of societal norms.

Sexual Minority: Describes individuals who identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual or those who are attracted to or have sexual contact with people of the same gender.

Sexual Orientation: How a person describes their sexual or emotional attachment to others. Recommended instead of "sexual preference" or "lifestyle."

Framing all interactions in the SANE exam with inclusive language is a starting point for improving patients' experiences.

The following phrases suggested by the National LGBT Health Education Center can help:

"How may I help you today?" (instead of tacking on sir, ma'am)

"What pronouns do you use?"

"What is your preferred name?"

"We ask all of our patients these questions because they are important for healthcare. However, you do not need to answer. If you would like to discuss this more, I would welcome your questions."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be disrespectful. What terms are you comfortable with?"

*nursinglicensuremap.com/blog/how-to-use-inclusive-language-in-healthcare/#gender-sexual-orientation