

Speaking of Intersex...

There are many ways to talk about intersex people and their experiences. There are even more ways to not talk about them. Here are some things to remember when referring to intersex folks:

- **Use** words such as “traits,” “variations,” or “presentations” instead of “conditions”
- **Never** use “hermaphrodite.” It is outdated, and many intersex people find it to be highly offensive
- **Recognize** intersex people are more than just their bodies. While this may be an important part of their identity, there is more to a person than just their physical appearance.
- **When** describing someone who is intersex, it is ok to say things like “X is intersex” or “X is an intersex person”
- **Never** out someone as intersex without their permission first
- **Remember** no two intersex people have the same experience. Different variations create unique circumstances, and it is best to avoid overgeneralizing

Noteworthy Intersex People

Pidgeon Pagonis

Hanne Gaby Odiele

Cheryl Chase

Tony Briffa

Dana Zzyym

Lynnell Stephani Long

Caster Semenya

Dan Christian Ghattas

To Learn More

- **The Intersex Society of North America**
www.isna.org/
- **InterAct: Advocates for Intersex Youth**
www.interactadvocates.org/
- **Intersex & Genderqueer Recognition Project**
www.intersexrecognition.org/
- **Intersex International - U.S. chapter**
www.intersexequality.com/

Local Resources

- **Transgender Center of the Rockies**
www.transgendercenteroftherockies.org
- **OneColorado**
www.one-colorado.org
- **The Center on Colfax**
www.lgbtqcolorado.org

* We would like to note that sex, gender, and sexual orientation are defined as different entities, although they do inform each other and are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

†Pamphlet written and compiled by the LGBTQ Student Resource Center staff.

Intersex 101



Understanding the Spectrum of Sex

Some Definitions:

- **Sex** refers to one's biology, including hormones, chromosomes, gonads, and genitalia*
- **Intersex** is the general term used to describe a set of biological, physiological, and sex-related anatomical variations that differ from the typical characteristics of the sex categories "male" and "female"*
- **Intergender** is a gender identity that is specific to, and used by some, intersex people. They may or may not also identify as trans/nonbinary
- **Ipsogender** is a term that describes intersex people who identify with the gender they were assigned
- **Dyadic people** are those who are not intersex. Also referred to as perisex
- **Dyadism** is a system based on the belief that there are only two sexes, male and female, and is reinforced on every level (medical, legal, social, etc.)
- **Intersexism** is the fear, distrust, hatred, etc. of intersex people and concepts that can lead to violence, "othering," and discrimination
- **Differences in Sex Development** is a term used by the medical community to describe people born with intersex traits. Also referred to as Disorders of Sex Development and commonly abbreviated as DSD
- **CAFAB/CAMAB** is shorthand for Coercively Assigned Female/Male at Birth and is used when genital surgery is performed on a newborn intersex person to better fit within the dyadic model
- **Female/Male-typical** are used to describe how bodies are classified in relation to sex development



Intersex Pride Flag
Create by Oll Australia



Intersex Pride Flag
Create by Natalie Phox

There are a number of different ways our bodies develop and shape themselves. In fact, there are over 70 different documented intersex variations! Here are the most commonly named variations:

- **Turner Syndrome** is a variation in which a person is born with only one X chromosome
- **Klinefelter Syndrome** is the classification used when an individual is born with two or more X chromosomes and a Y chromosome. Most effects and symptoms come about after puberty
- **Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome** is when a person with XY chromosomes is resistant to androgens and thus develops a female-typical body; this resistance can be partial (PAIS) or complete (CAIS)
- **Swyer Syndrome** is when a person born with XY chromosomes has a female-typical body, but has nonfunctional "streak" gonads instead of ovaries or testes
- **Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia** is a genetic variation where hormone production in the adrenal glands of a person with XX chromosomes usually results in ambiguous genitalia and male-typical characteristics throughout the lifetime
- **Gonadal Dysgenesis** refers to the atypical development of the genitals which is present in a variety of intersex conditions
- **5-Alpha Reductase Deficiency** is the absence of the enzyme that converts testosterone into another hormone that is responsible for the development of many male-typical secondary sex characteristics

Research and data about intersex people is sparse. However, there is enough information to provide valuable insight into the lives and experiences of intersex people and some of the issues they face. Some of these include:

- **Experts estimate** that about 1.7% of the global population is intersex. This makes intersex about as common as people with red hair
- **As it stands**, Malta and Portugal are the only countries in the world that offers full autonomy and legal protections to intersex people, though there are some others that are making progress
- **When** coercive assignment is performed, it is usually without the knowledge or consent of the parents and, because it is usually unnecessary as well, may result in a lifetime of surgical procedures
- **Because** chromosomal and genetic testing can be cost prohibitive, most people who are intersex have no idea
- **Intersex** is not hermaphroditism. True hermaphroditism is when a being can change their sex at will, and is usually seen in invertebrate species. Humans do not have this capability and therefore should never be referred to as hermaphrodites

Sex and Gender are Different!

Most people interchange sex and gender, thinking they are the same thing. Most people also think that, just like gender, there are only two sexes. The fact intersex people exist demonstrates that is not the case. Additionally, intersex people may identify with any gender, just like dyadic people. It's important to recognize people come in many shapes and sizes, whether those differences are internal or external, and that should never be the basis for trying to determine a person's value.