



# 10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SEXUALITY

- 1 Sexuality is about more than just sex or sexual orientation.** It involves who we are, our identity, how we see ourselves in the world, and what we believe about our abilities. It is about both our physical bodies and our values.
- 2 “Gender” and “sex” do not mean the same thing.** “Gender” refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, and attributes we think are appropriate for men and women. For example, some gender stereotypes would be that women are caregivers and men are hunters. “Sex” refers to the physical differences in our bodies.
- 3 Sexual orientation refers to who you are attracted to.** Sexual orientation is about your sexual and emotional feelings towards other people, who may be of the same and/or the opposite sex.
- 4 A person does not choose their sexual orientation.** Biology and genetics determine if a person is heterosexual, homosexual, or any other sexual orientation.
- 5 There are many types of gender and sexual orientation.** Some people may identify with one while others may feel that they don’t fit entirely into any category.
  - **Heterosexual.** People who are attracted to members of the opposite sex.
  - **Homosexual.** People who are attracted to members of the same sex.
  - **Bisexual.** People who are attracted to both men and women.
  - **Asexual.** People who might be attracted to men or women, but don’t feel sexual attraction.
  - **Gender variation.** People who don’t identify with the gender assigned to them, or who don’t follow stereotypical gender roles.
  - **Transgender or transsexual.** People who don’t feel right about the gender assigned to them, and may want to change their gender.
  - **Intersex.** People who have a body that is not considered typically male or female. Most intersex people identify as male or female rather than transgender or transsexual.



# SEXUALITY

- 6 The term “two-spirited” is used to describe people who have both feminine and masculine spirits. A person may identify as two-spirited because of their sexual orientation, their gender or sexual identity, and/or their role in society. The term does not necessarily refer to homosexuality. The term is not used or accepted by all cultures or all people.
- 7 Colonization has changed views and values about gender and sexuality. Pre-contact, sexuality was not shameful and people talked about it openly. Two-spirited people were respected for their social roles such as medicine people, healers, and visionaries. You can reclaim these values of diversity and inclusiveness.
- 8 Homophobia or transphobia is the fear or hatred of anyone thought to be gay, lesbian, transsexual, transgender, two-spirited or intersex. It can be directed at someone else or oneself. It can range from making jokes or avoiding certain people to verbal and even physical abuse. **Heterosexism** is the belief that heterosexuality is the only normal and acceptable sexual orientation or that it's better than other sexual orientations.
- 9 Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and two-spirited people are at greater risk for depression and suicide. Ongoing discrimination and isolation is stressful. According to a recent study<sup>1</sup>, gay and lesbian teens are twice as likely to be depressed and three times as likely to have thought about or attempted suicide. You can help your community by being inclusive and creating safe spaces for everyone, such as in the family or at school.
- 10 It is okay to talk about gender and sexuality. Talking openly, respectfully, and compassionately helps to overcome feelings of fear and shame. If you need someone to talk to, there are help lines you can call:
  - Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
  - Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line (free, confidential peer support): 1-800-268-9688, [www.youthline.ca](http://www.youthline.ca)
  - GLBT National Youth Talkline: 1-800-246-PRIDE (1-800-246-7743)
  - Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender National Hotline: 1-888-THE-GLNH (1-888-843-4564)



## learn more...

- The Canadian Federation for Sexual Health → [www.cfsh.ca](http://www.cfsh.ca)
  - Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation
  - [www.cfsh.ca/Your\\_Sexual\\_Health/Gender-Identity-and-Sexual-Orientation](http://www.cfsh.ca/Your_Sexual_Health/Gender-Identity-and-Sexual-Orientation)
- Dancing to Eagle Spirit Society → [www.dancingtoeaglespiritsociety.org](http://www.dancingtoeaglespiritsociety.org)
- Egale Canada → [www.egale.ca](http://www.egale.ca)
- First Nations Centre at the National Aboriginal Health Organization → [www.naho.ca/fnc](http://www.naho.ca/fnc)  
(under Publications)
  - *Sexual health toolkit part I: Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)* (2011)
  - *Sexual health toolkit part II: Sexuality and relationships* (2011)
- Native Youth Sexual Health Network → [www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com](http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com)
- Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) Canada → [www.pflagcanada.ca](http://www.pflagcanada.ca)

<sup>1</sup>Marshal MP et al. “Suicidality and depression disparities between sexual minority and heterosexual youth: A meta-analytic review.” 2011. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 49(2): 115-123



National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO)  
Organisation nationale de la santé autochtone (ONSA)  
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