

## Gender Dysphoria

Gender dysphoria is defined as significant distress resulting from an individual feeling as though their assigned gender does not match their experienced or expressed gender. An individual strongly identifies with the opposite gender instead of the gender assigned at birth, which can result in significant distress. Those with gender dysphoria desire to be the opposite sex and often dress and use mannerisms associated with the other gender as well.

### Signs of Gender Dysphoria

Gender dysphoria presents differently across ages. The period that children begin expressing gendered behaviors and interests begins around two years old, which is also the time that cross-gender behaviors can start to appear. Early-onset gender dysphoria typically starts in childhood and continues into adolescence and adulthood, whereas late-onset gender dysphoria usually occurs around or after puberty. Signs must be present for at least six months for gender dysphoria to be diagnosed.

Signs of gender dysphoria for children include:

- Personal contradiction between experienced or expressed gender and the gender they were assigned at birth
- Insisting that they are the opposite gender
- A strong desire to be the opposite gender during imaginative play
- A strong dislike of their sexual anatomy
- Significant distress

Signs of gender dysphoria for adolescents and adults include:

- Intense contradiction between the individual's experienced or expressed gender and their physical characteristics (sexual organs, breasts, underarm hair, etc.)
- Persistent desire to be treated as the other gender
- Desire for physical characteristics of the opposite gender
- Significant distress at school, home or in social settings

### Diagnosis & Treatment

The cause of gender dysphoria is unknown but is thought to be a result of hormonal consequences in the womb. Onset of cross-gender interests and activities usually starts between ages two and four, but some parents report that their child has always had cross-gender behaviors. Only a small number of children will continue to have symptoms in later life. Adult onset gender dysphoria typically occurs in early to mid-adulthood. Psychotherapy and family counseling is recommended for children, whereas psychotherapy or couples therapy is recommended for adults. Sexual reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy are also options, but identity issues can continue after this treatment. The best outcomes have been seen with early diagnosis, a supportive environment, and a thorough treatment plan that respects the wishes of the individual.

Source – Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/conditions/gender-dysphoria>