

Why we ask about sex assigned at birth and gender identity

We understand that these questions can feel very personal.

For some people, they can also be upsetting or distressing.

We want you to know:

- We ask these questions because they help us provide safe, respectful and personalised care
- We aim to treat this information with respect and care
- This brochure explains why we ask these questions and how we respect your privacy by only sharing information when it is needed.

Why do we ask these questions?

To give you safe and personalised care, we need to understand both your medical needs and how you want to be recognised and respected. This includes:

- How your body may respond to care or treatment
- How you identify and how you would like to be addressed

That's why we ask about:

- **Sex assigned at birth** – the label given at birth (male, female or intersex), usually based on a baby's external physical characteristics.
- **Gender identity** – how you understand and describe your gender. This may be male, female, both, neither, or another gender, and may be the same as or different from your sex assigned at birth.

These are different, and both help us provide safe, respectful and appropriate care

Since 1 July 2024, we are required to ask about sex assigned at birth and gender identity, and to report this information to the Department of Health. This information is de-identified and used to understand how services are used and to plan and improve care for gender diverse people.

You may be asked these questions more than once. This helps make sure your information is accurate and up to date each time you attend.



Austin Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays its respects to Elders past, present and emerging.
Austin Health celebrates, values and includes people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.



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口译员 傳譯員 INTERPRETE TERCÜMAN ΔΙΕΡΜΗΝΕΑΣ
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Why sex assigned at birth matters in medical care

Health checks and screening

Some health conditions are linked to specific body parts. Knowing your sex assigned at birth helps clinicians arrange the right screening at the right time, such as:

- Cervical screening
- Breast screening
- Prostate checks
- Heart health assessments

This helps make sure you don't miss out on important care, regardless of your gender.

Blood tests and lab results

Many blood tests use different reference ranges based on sex assigned at birth.

This includes tests such as:

- Haemoglobin
- Iron levels
- Kidney and liver function

Using the correct reference range helps clinicians:

- Interpret results accurately
 - Avoid missed findings or unnecessary follow-up
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Radiology scans (imaging tests)

Radiology scans create pictures of the inside of the body.

This includes tests such as:

- Scans such as CT, Ultrasound or an MRI of the abdomen and pelvis
- Breast imaging (mammogram, ultrasound, MRI)

Some scans and results depend on the organs a person has.

Providing information about sex assigned at birth and gender identity helps clinicians:

- Choose the right scan and focus on the correct organs
 - Interpret images accurately
 - Avoid missed findings or unnecessary follow-up
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Medicines and how they affect your body

Bodies can process some medicines differently based on biological and hormonal factors.

Knowing your sex assigned at birth can help clinicians:

- Choose the right medication and dose
- Use anaesthetic medicines safely
- Reduce the risk of side effects

Emergency care

In an emergency, you may not be able to explain your medical history.

Having accurate information about sex assigned at birth can be an important part of making quick, life-saving decisions, especially when time is critical.

Hormones and medical care

If you are taking hormones, or have taken them in the past, this can affect how some tests, screenings and treatments are understood.

It's important to tell your healthcare team about any hormone therapy you are using or have used.

This information helps them:

- choose the right tests and screening
- understand your results correctly
- provide care that is safe and right for you

We try to ask these questions in a respectful way and use language that suits you. We know this doesn't always happen, and we are working to improve.

Your privacy matters

Your health information is handled according to strict privacy laws and hospital policies.

- Only staff directly involved in your care need to see relevant information to provide safe treatment.
- Your information will be recorded in your medical record. Staff not involved in your care should not access your personal information.
- You can ask who can see your information and how it is used.
- You can request to access information held by Austin Health about you, through the Freedom of Information process. Find out more at austin.org.au/FOI

We aim to treat your information with care and respect. If something doesn't feel right, you can tell us. For more information about how we protect your privacy see austin.org.au/protecting-your-privacy



What you may see in your discharge documents

Some discharge documents may include information about your sex assigned at birth and/or gender identity, if it is clinically relevant. This helps support safe follow-up care with your GP or other healthcare providers after you leave hospital.

Examples of discharge documents may include:

- **Discharge summary** – a summary of your hospital stay and any follow-up care your GP needs to provide. This document includes both sex assigned at birth and gender identity.
- **Discharge prescriptions and medication list** – these do not include sex assigned at birth or gender identity.
- **Pathology or Radiology referrals or results:** these include sex assigned at birth only. These services use an IT platform based in the United States that does not currently support displaying gender identity.

You may notice this information is not always included or is shown differently across documents. This is because we use a range of systems, some managed by external providers.

We have limited control over how these systems are configured and display information, but we are working to improve consistency and make sure information is handled in a respectful and inclusive way.

Your discharge documents are sent to your GP and uploaded to your My Health Record. For more information about My Health Record, you can visit the [Australian Digital Health Agency website](#) or speak with a staff member.

Feedback and concerns

We welcome your feedback.

If you want to share your experience or raise a concern, you can contact us at:

feedback@austin.org.au

Your feedback helps us improve care for everyone.

