

Endometriosis: Access and Support for Trans and Gender Diverse People



Getting care for endometriosis can take time. Some trans and gender diverse people may find the process distressing and frustrating, especially if their doctor doesn't expect endometriosis because of their gender.

It can also feel isolating, as many clinics and health services are labelled or designed as 'women's health' services.

You deserve safe, respectful and inclusive care. This fact sheet covers how to manage these issues and ways to find inclusive care.

We use medical words in this fact sheet, such as uterus, vagina and menstruation. Some trans and gender diverse people use different words for their bodies.

How you may feel

Living with endometriosis can affect how you feel about your body and identity. You may feel disconnected from your body, experience dysphoria, or feel stressed about how others see you. You are not alone.

It may help to:

- Talk with a gender-affirming counsellor or psychologist who understands both endometriosis and gender identity.
- Use mindfulness techniques to manage dysphoria, stress or pain.
- Connect with trans-led peer support groups, online communities or other people with shared experiences
- Call QLife for support on 1800 184 527 or visit qlife.org.au.

Health services are responsible for providing inclusive, respectful care. This table outlines common challenges that arise within the health system and suggestions for how to navigate them.



Challenges



What you can do

Feeling recognised and respected

Assumptions that you can't have endometriosis

- Ask your GP for a referral to a pelvic pain clinic or a clinician with experience in supporting trans and gender diverse people.
- Clinicians should document that pelvic pain and other endometriosis symptoms were not followed up. You can request a copy of this record.

Past experiences make you reluctant to access care

- Ask if the doctor has experience caring for trans or gender diverse people before the appointment.
- Bring a trusted support person to appointments.
- Share written information or this fact sheet to help guide the conversation.
- You are entitled to inclusive care. If a clinic does not meet your needs ask for a referral to a more inclusive service.

Forms or medical records not matching your correct name, gender or pronouns

- Health services are responsible for recording and using your correct name and pronouns.
- Staff are responsible for correcting errors promptly. You can request an update to your record at any time.
- Carry a card or note with your name and pronouns if that feels helpful.

Staff using the incorrect pronouns/gender on forms

- Staff are responsible for using your correct details. If you wish to, you can remind them of your pronouns, or ask your support person to do this.
- Repeated errors should be reported to the clinic manager.
- Know your rights: anti-discrimination laws can protect trans and gender diverse people in healthcare. You may be able to make a formal complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission and/or your state or territory anti-discrimination body (rules and time limits vary).

Clinics feel unsafe or are gendered

- Some clinics show signs of inclusive care (e.g. rainbow tick, LGBTQI+ flags, photos or posters).
- If it feels safe to do so, you can ask whether there is a quieter or more private waiting area.
- Some clinics offer private waiting rooms or gender-neutral bathrooms, but this is not always possible.
- Bring someone you trust to appointments for support.
- Search transhub.org.au or ask friends for recommendations about clinics they have found inclusive.

Doctor doesn't know about gender-affirming care or how hormones interact with endometriosis

- Ask your doctor for a referral to a clinician with experience in gender-affirming care. You deserve care that understands your health needs.

Diagnosis feels invasive

- Ask if you can have types of scans that you feel comfortable with. You may be able to have an MRI instead of an internal exam.
- Your doctor is required to obtain your informed consent before any test or procedure. You have the right to decline, or to ask them to stop at any time.
- Bring a support person to appointments if that helps you feel safer.

Doctors focus on fertility when it's not your priority

- Your clinician should ask about your priorities before assuming fertility is your concern.
- Let them know what matters to you. You could say: Fertility isn't my focus – I'd like to talk about managing pain and my quality of life.
- Ask for care that aligns with your gender.

Looking ahead

You have a right to receive respectful, affirming health care. You know your body and your needs. Endometriosis is a long-term condition, but many people find ways to manage it well.

References:

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