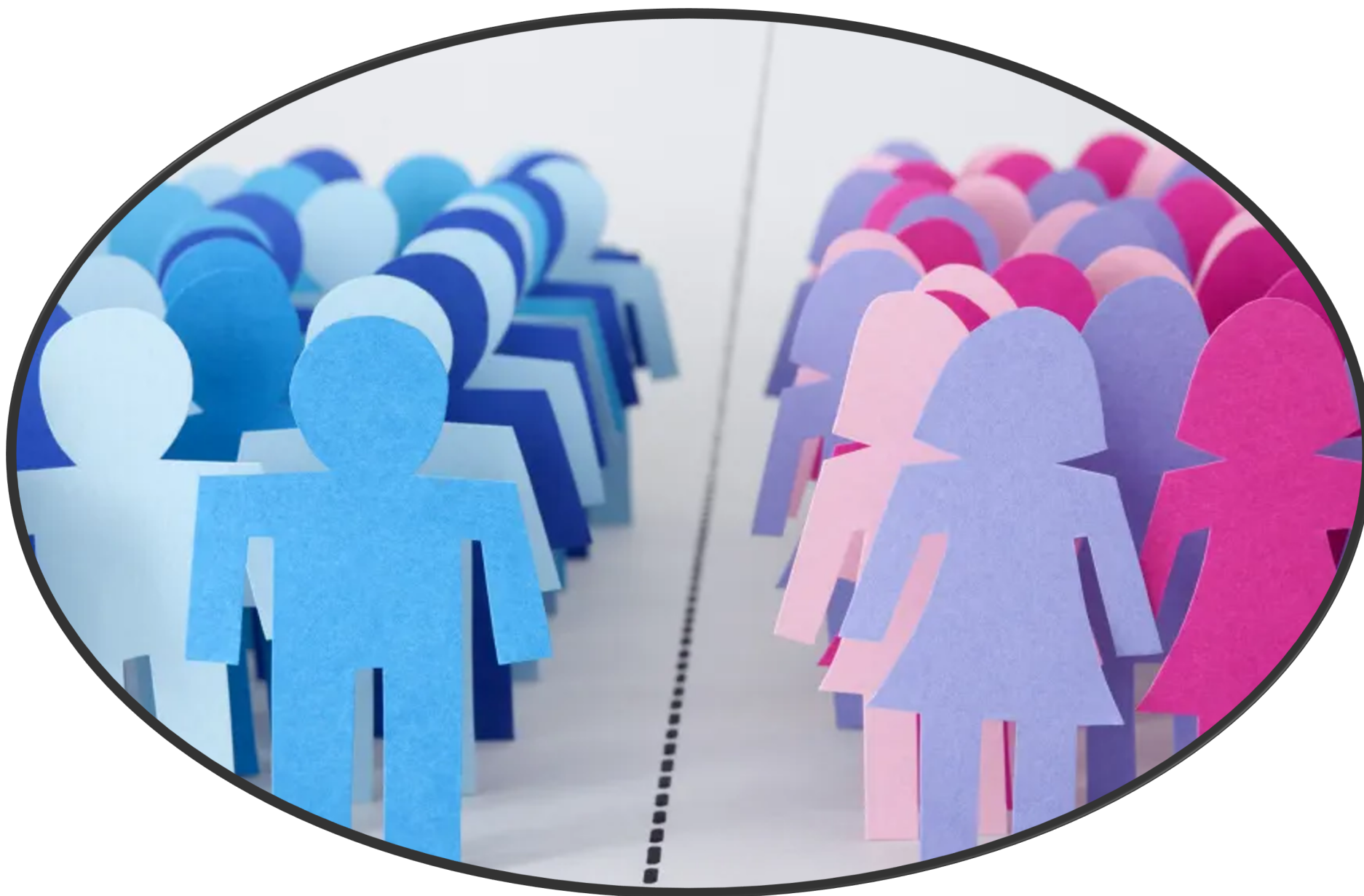


## What parents need to know about gender identity



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When a baby is born, they are assigned a gender identity that is written on their birth certificate—boy or girl. It is a label that is instantly determined by their genitalia. But sex organs are not the same thing as gender.

When a child is old enough to identify his or her gender, it is a matter of who they feel they are on the inside—and this can differ from the gender they were assigned, this can be confusing for parents/carers.

Experts agree the most important thing is support, love, and acceptance to help them gain a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Studies show, when transgender children are accepted by their families, they are more likely to believe they will have a good life and be happy, productive adults.

To help you make sense of this—and most of all, help *them* be who they truly are in the most supportive way possible, here are some of the most common questions surrounding gender identity.

Children as young as two years old can understand the concept of sex/gender and by the time a child is five or six years old, they may have a more rigid gender identity.

Since gender stereotypes tend to be reinforced, some kids may not present as their true selves until adulthood.

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### **What's The Difference Between Gender and Sexual Orientation?**

Gender is how we see ourselves while sexual orientation is who we are physically, emotionally, and romantically attracted to. Confusing the two can be detrimental because it makes assumptions—like a boy who tries on his sister's dresses is assumed to be gay, and a girl who cuts her hair short and dresses like a boy is assumed to be a lesbian.

It can also confuse the child about who they are—i.e. a transgender or nonbinary child might think they are gay or lesbian before understanding their gender identity. However, a person's sexual identification has nothing to do with their sexual orientation because transgenders are diverse in gender identities (the way you feel on the inside), gender expressions (the way you dress and act), and sexual orientation (the people you are attracted to).

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### Non - Binary

When we are old enough to understand the concept of gender, most people are taught that there are two genders, male and female. It is an idea known as the gender binary—or having two parts. But the reality is, not everyone fits neatly into a box labelled either “male” or “female”, many people identify their gender as not 100% male or 100% female.

“People who are nonbinary often go through a period where they feel 'different' without realizing why. They determine they are nonbinary when they recognize that they do not feel either male or female—and

that those feelings do not just have to do with gender presentation.

In other words, they realize that, for example, they are not just boys who want to wear dresses, but individuals who feel neither fully male nor fully female.

Pronouns, or the way people describe themselves, are a very personal thing, especially to those who are nonbinary. “The only way to know what pronouns anyone of any gender uses is to ask them,” Gender-neutral pronouns they/them are used by some nonbinary people, but someone who is nonbinary may prefer to use a binary pronoun like he/him. Titles like Mr. and Mrs. indicate a binary gender of male or female; many nonbinary people use the title Mx, which is gender-neutral