

# Essential Sexual Health Questions to Ask Adults

Ask all of your adult patients the questions on this card to start the conversation and to begin taking a thorough sexual history. For more questions to assess risk, see Table 1 of “**Sexual Health and Your Patients: A Provider’s Guide.**”

## Ask at Least Annually

Have you been sexually active in the last year?

YES

- What types of sex do you have (oral, vaginal, anal)?
- With men, women, both, or another?
- How many sexual partners have you had?

NO

Have you ever been sexually active?

YES

NO

Continue with medical history.

## Ask Older Adults

Has sex changed for you?  
If so, how?

### Conversational Tips:

- Ensure confidentiality & emphasize this is routine for all patients
- Also, ask open-ended questions, e.g., any sexual concerns or questions you’d like to discuss?
- Be non-judgmental (verbal and non-verbal)

Ask at least once, and update as needed.  
Gender identity and sexual orientation can be fluid.

1. What do you consider yourself to be?
  - A. Lesbian, gay, or homosexual
  - B. Straight or heterosexual
  - C. Bisexual
  - D. Another (please specify)
  - E. Don’t know
2. What is your current gender identity?
  - A. Male
  - B. Female
  - C. Transgender man
  - D. Transgender woman
  - E. Neither exclusively male nor female (e.g. non-binary or nonconforming)
  - F. Another (please specify)
  - G. Decline to answer
3. What sex were you assigned at birth?
  - A. Male
  - B. Female
  - C. Decline to answer

# Essential Sexual Health Questions to Ask Adolescents

## Ask at Least Annually

1. What questions do you have about your body and/or sex?
2. Your body changes a lot during adolescence, and although this is normal, it can also be confusing. Some of my patients feel as though they're more of a boy or a girl, or even something else, while their body changes in another way. How has this been for you?
3. Some patients your age are exploring new relationships. Who do you find yourself attracted to? (Or, you could ask, "How would you describe your sexual orientation?")
4. Have you ever had sex with someone? By "sex," I mean vaginal, oral, or anal sex. (If sexual activity has already been established, ask about sex in the past year.)

## If the Adolescent Has Had Sex, Ask About

- Number of lifetime partners
- Number of partners in the past year
- Gender of those partners (men, women, both, or another)
- Types of sex (vaginal, oral, anal)
- Use of protection (condoms and contraception)
- Coercion, rape, statutory rape, and incest

## If the Adolescent Identifies as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (LGBTQ)

- Ask whether they have a trusted adult to talk to.
- Assess the adolescent's safety at home and school and whether they are being bullied or harassed.
- Link your patient to community or national organizations such as [pflag.org](https://pflag.org) or [thetrevorproject.org](https://thetrevorproject.org) for education and support.
- Counsel all sexually active adolescents about using condoms and contraception. Adolescents who identify as lesbian or gay may also have sex with members of the opposite sex, which increases the risk for unintended pregnancy.

For more information, visit: [nationalcoalitionforsexualhealth.org](https://nationalcoalitionforsexualhealth.org)