

What is intersexuality?

Intersexuality might mean something different for each person who identifies that way. The easiest way to understand the word "intersexuality" is as instances where the medical system has categorized a person as having a reproductive system that is inconsistent with the binary sex categories (i.e. female/male).

REMEMBER:

Everybody has the right to self-identify! No matter what definition you've learned, each person may define themselves differently.

The term "intersex" is really complex, and is rarely discussed or understood by the LGBTQ+ community. Intersexuality is different than other identities because it is often an identity that is forced on somebody at birth by the medical system.

When a baby is born who the doctor or medical professional believes has "inconsistent" reproductive or sexual organs, they are often labeled as "intersex".

If you want to learn about intersexuality, here are some words to understand. Keep in mind that these are just the way we understand these words; each person who identifies this way might understand a term differently:

○ INTERSEX PERSON

a person who the medical system has categorized as having a reproductive system that is inconsistent with the binary sex categories (i.e. female/male)





○ DYADIC PERSON

a person who the medical system has categorized as having a reproductive system that is consistent and fits with one of the binary sex categories

○ ASSIGNED SEX

a term used to recognize that biological sexes are not black and white, and that people are assigned sexes by the scientific and medical community

Check us out online!

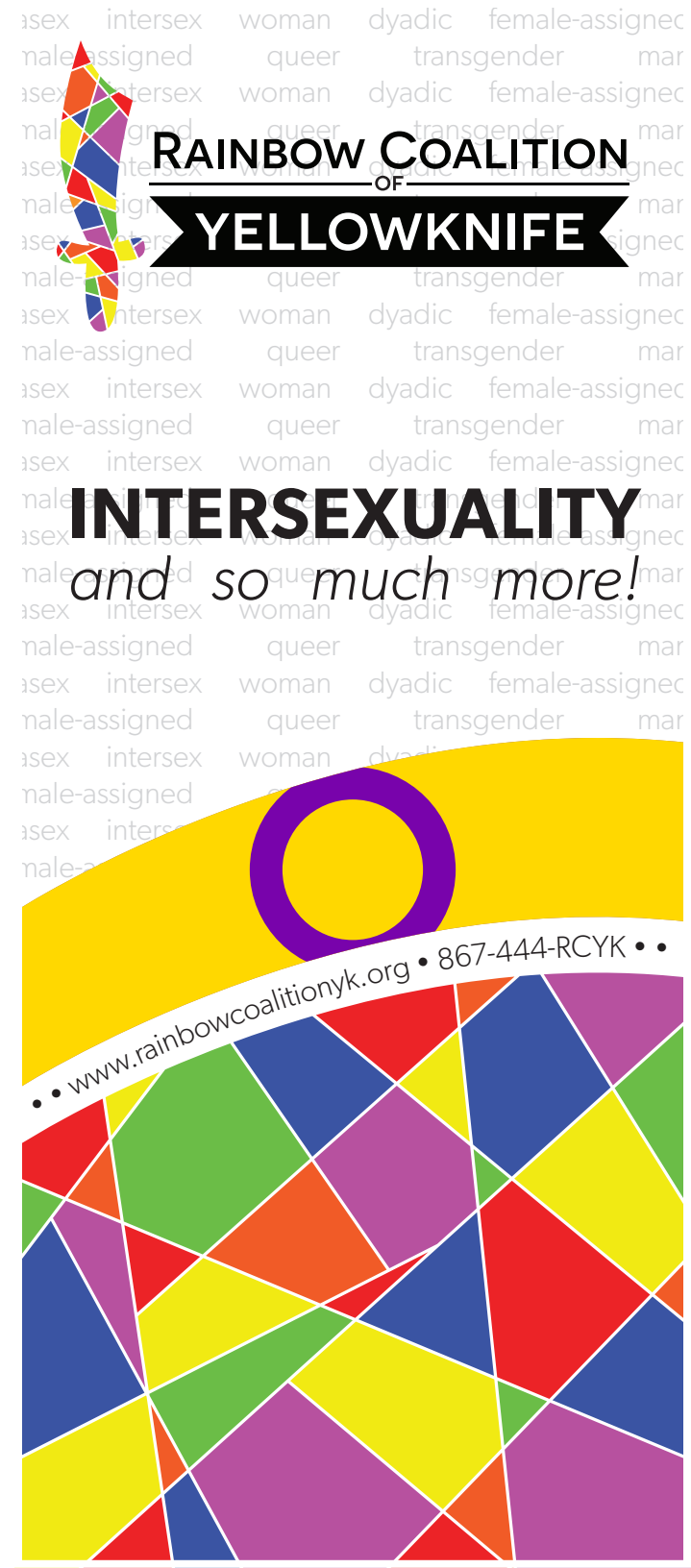
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Things to Know:

- The two sex categories that are most recognized in our society were created by the scientific community to classify humans. Although there are only two binary classifications (male/female), there are way more than two sex categories.
- Intersex people cannot reproduce with themselves.
- Very few people, intersex or dyadic, know whether or not they have “consistent” reproductive systems.
- Historically, and even still today, medical professionals often perform surgery on intersex babies for mostly aesthetic purposes. These surgeries often cause immense trauma for these people once they grow up.
- Intersex people do not have bodies that are “both female and male”, but rather have reproductive systems where some components are “female” and some components are “male”.
- Most people who discover they’re intersex only find out when they are adults and navigating infertility.
- The term “hermaphrodite” is considered an incredibly violent slur and should never be used to refer to intersex humans.

Am I intersex?

Knowing whether or not you’re intersex is a lot different than other forms of LGBTQ+ identity. Generally, people who are intersex are defined as such by an outside system (such as the medical system) rather than their own hearts or minds. The best idea might be to consult your doctor, but if you don’t feel safe doing this, you can always come chat with us.

Even if you are defined by the medical system as intersex, it’s important to remember that you still have the right to self-identify.

Discrimination & Oppression:

Intersex people often experience discrimination and oppression because of how little most people understand the complexities of biological sex.

Discrimination against intersex people is called interphobia. This term was coined in 2010 by Professor Cary Gabriel Costello, PhD.

Interphobia:

Interphobia describes the fear, hatred or intolerance of people who are intersex or believed to be intersex.

The most extreme, and unfortunately widespread, example of interphobia is the practice of intersex genital mutilation (IGM). This practice is generally used to try and “fix” intersex bodies to fit into male and female sex norms that exist for simplicities sake rather than being based in hard science.

Another example of interphobia is when athletes’ hormone levels are scrutinized so intensely that any intersex woman who biologically has higher levels of testosterone is required to undergo medically unnecessary treatments in order to be recognized or validated as a woman.

More subtle forms of interphobia include the use of words like “hermaphrodite” (**this is a slur**) or when intersex people are referred to as “its” or are rid of their humanity.

Particularly most significantly, intersex people are often blamed for their realities, rather than being offered acknowledgement that their identity as intersex people is based entirely on a scientific classification of humans that doesn’t recognize their body as “standard”.

RCYK 201:

“201” sections are meant to provide you with a bit extra. It’s helpful if you have a little background on queer and trans issues.

Medicalized Violence

The way that the medical system has historically (and presently) perpetuated the idea that any body that fits outside of the two biological sex categories needs to be “fixed” is a form of medicalized violence against people with intersexed bodies.

Generally, babies with intersex bodies are forced into surgery based on the sexist question of whether or not the baby will grow up to be an adult male who can enjoy sex. If the medical professional believes that the babies external genitals will never be a “typical” penis, they often elect to perform surgery to give the baby a vagina, despite the fact that there is no medical or health reason as to why this surgery should take place.

Intersex babies who experience medicalized violence often have to navigate related trauma in adulthood.

Support & Help:

If you’re an intersex person, and you need some support, don’t hesitate to give us a shout.

We support all intersex people, no matter the age, gender, race, or where they live in the NWT.

You can reach us by:

- calling us at 867-444-RCYK (7295)
- emailing us at info@rainbowcoalitionyk.org
- finding us online by searching “Rainbow Coalition of Yellowknife”
- visiting us in person at 5112 52nd Street in Yellowknife.