



# Gender- Affirming Care

Resources for Occupational  
Therapy Practitioners

August 2023

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# COMMON LGBTQ+ TERMINOLOGY

Listed below are terms that practitioners may hear when working with members of the LGBTQ+ community. This glossary was adapted from a publication by GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), which is a non-profit organization focused on LGBTQ+ advocacy. Click the link on page 4 to access GLAAD's complete glossary.

As always, it is important to always ask individuals what terms they use to describe their gender identity and sexual orientation. Assumptions regarding one's identity can be harmful to individuals and detrimental to the patient-therapist relationship.

## Sexual Orientation

A person's romantic, emotional, and physical attraction to another person.

## Lesbian

A woman whose romantic, emotional, and physical attraction is to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay or as gay women.

## Gay

A term used to describe a person whose romantic, emotional, and physical attractions are to people of the same sex.

## Bisexual

A term used to describe a person who may be romantically, emotionally, and physically attracted to people of more than one gender.

## LGBTQ

An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.

## Transgender

A term used to describe someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

## Queer

Once considered a derogatory term, queer individuals have reclaimed this term to describe themselves. It may be used by an individual to describe their sexual orientation as not heterosexual.

## Nonbinary

This term is used by people who experience their gender identity and gender expression as being outside the gender binary categories of man and woman.

## Allosexual

An adjective used to describe a person who experiences sexual attraction to others, and is not asexual.

## Aromantic

A term used to describe a person who does not experience romantic attraction to other people.

## Asexual

A term used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction to other people.

## Heterosexual

A term used to describe a person who is romantically, emotionally, and physically attracted to people of a sex different than their own.

## Pansexual

A term that describes a person who may be romantically, emotionally, or physically attracted to any person, regardless of gender identity.

## Questioning

This term may be used to describe someone who is exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

## Ally

A term used to describe a straight and/or cisgender person who supports and advocates for the LGBTQ+ community.

## Coming Out

This term is used to describe the lifelong process of accepting one's identity. Once people feel safe, they may choose to share their authentic selves with others.

## Outing

This term refers to publicly revealing another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's permission.

## Out

A term that refers to a person who openly identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, transgender in their personal, public, or professional lives.

## Homophobia

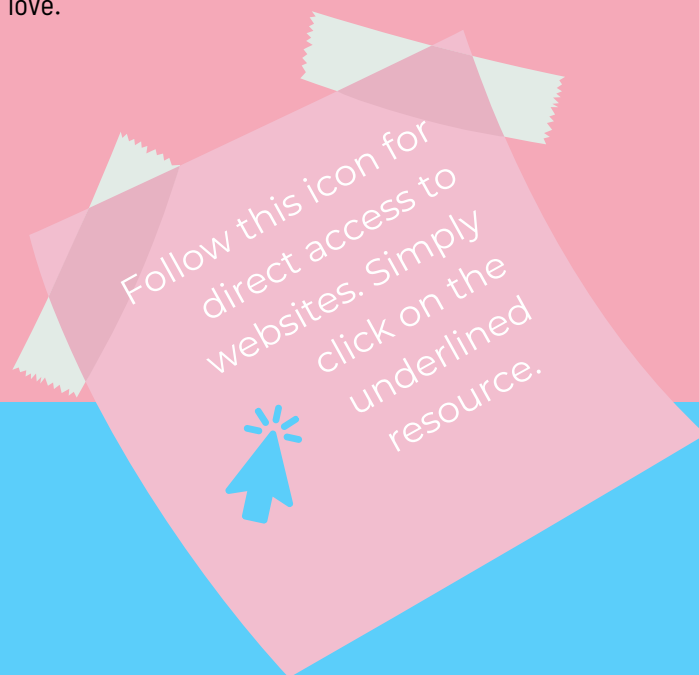
This term refers to the stigma, discrimination, or hatred toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer people, expressed in speech or actions.

## Lifestyle

This is a derogatory term used by anti-LGBTQ activists that implies being LGBTQ is a choice. This term should not be utilized.

## Marriage Equality

In June 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that every American has the constitutional right to marry the person they love.



**For more terms, see  
GLAAD's Glossary of  
Terms at**



[glaad.org/reference/terms/](https://www.glaad.org/reference/terms/)

# WHAT IS GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE?

The World Health Organization defines gender-affirming care as a set of medical interventions to support and affirm an individual's gender identity. These may include medical, social, psychological, and behavioral interventions. Some typical surgical interventions may include:

- Facial surgery
- Penile construction (phalloplasty/metoidioplasty)
- Vaginal construction (vaginoplasty)
- Top surgery

The Human Rights Campaign explains that gender-affirming care is medically necessary healthcare that allows individuals to live authentically as themselves.



## for More Resources

AAMC: [What is gender-affirming care? Your questions answered](#)

HRC: [Get the Facts on Gender-Affirming Care](#)

GLADD: [FACT SHEET](#)

ACLU: [Five Things to Know About Gender-Affirming Health Care](#)

# What is top surgery?

Top surgery is another name for chest masculinization or feminization. This surgical procedure may include augmentation or removal of breast tissue with positioning and shaping of the areola and nipple. Transgender or non-binary individuals may choose to undergo top surgery as part of their transition roadmap. For more detailed information regarding the surgical process of top surgery, the following resources are helpful.


## More Resources

Johns Hopkins: [Top Surgery](#).

Stanford Medicine  
Children's Health:

[Gender Affirmation Top Surgery](#).





# Role of OT in Gender-affirming Care

Occupational therapy practitioners can help improve client outcomes throughout the transition process. For individuals who have surgical interventions, occupational therapy practitioners can address specific post-surgical needs, including:

- Use of adaptive equipment or modified strategies for ADL participation
- Scar management training to avoid adhesions and improve healing
- Pain management strategies
- Energy conservation strategies during surgical recovery
- Sexual health and well-being
- Body image and psychosocial well-being
- Participation in meaningful daily occupations

These links provide inspiration for occupational therapy's inclusion in gender-affirming care services.



GHC: [Supporting Gender-affirming Care: A Holistic PT and OT Approach](#)

LGBTQ OT: [Transgender Health](#)

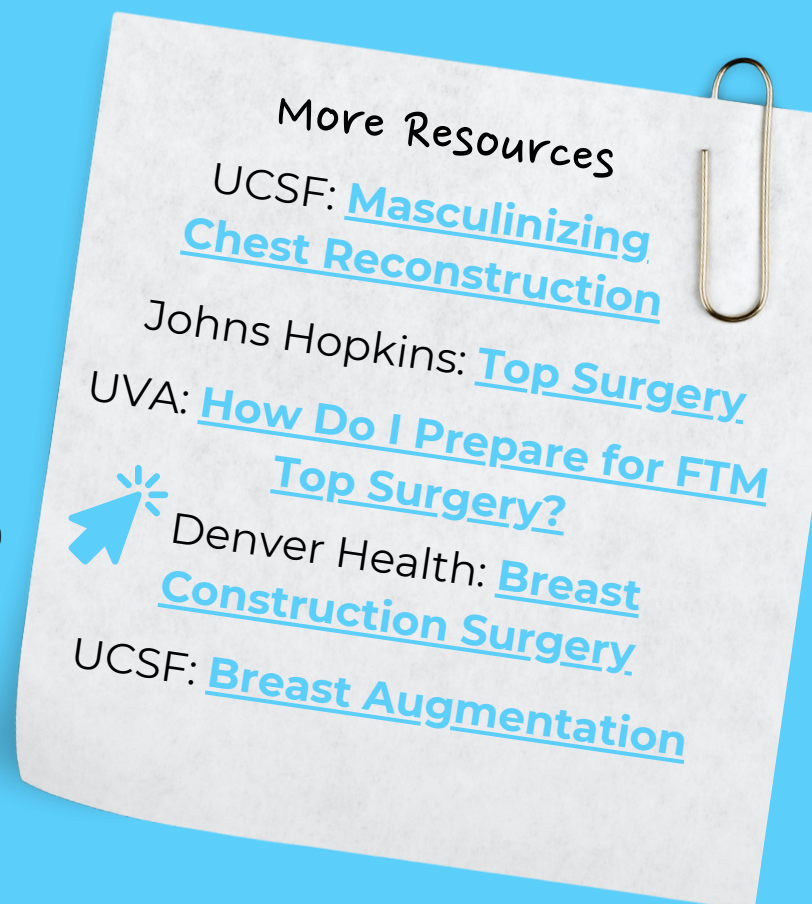
# OCCUPATIONAL PARTICIPATION POST-OP

Occupational therapy practitioners are experts at helping individuals participate in necessary and meaningful daily occupations, including ADL or Activities of Daily Living. Following gender-affirming surgical intervention, such as top surgery, individuals may need to adapt to safely perform ADLs, IADLs, sleep, leisure, and other daily occupations.



Opportunities for occupational therapy in post-op care include:

- Care of drains and dressings
- Address sleep hygiene due to altered sleeping positions
- ADL participation (such as alternative bathing and grooming) due to post-surgical garments
- Exercise (lower extremities/walking) to decrease likelihood of blood clots
- Modifications for lifting due to weight restrictions





# SCAR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES POST-OP

Post-op care following top surgery should follow any precautions and guidelines provided by the surgical team.

One way that occupational therapy practitioners can help in post-surgical care is through scar massage. Scars occur when collagen forms over the surgical incision. If scar tissue feels too firm or is adhering to the chest wall, scar massage can help break up adhesions.

Common strategies and precautions for scar massage include:

- Start slow (5 minutes/3x daily)
- Use unscented lotion during massage to keep the scar hydrated.
- Apply firm but gentle pressure using the pad of the thumb or finger and massage using slow circular motion.
- Do not massage scars until the incision is closed and healed.



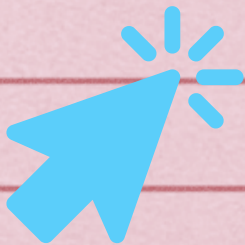
GCC: [Chest Reconstruction](#)  
Performance Health Academy:  
[Scar Management Techniques](#)  
GCC: [Scar Massaging](#)

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## LGBTQ+ Resources

The Rainbow OT: [Resources](#)

The Trevor Project: [Explore](#)



## Transgender Healthcare

WPATH: [Standards of Care](#)

Trans Lifeline: [Resource Library](#)

Folx Health: [The Library](#)

## Advocacy

Transgender Law Center: [About Us](#)

National Center for Transgender Equality: [Resources](#)

Trans Legislation Tracker: [2023 Anti-Trans Bills](#)

## Community Resources

Connect Safely: [LGBTQ Resources](#)

Campaign for Southern Equality: [Additional Guides and Resources](#)

Them: [100 Organizations Supporting Trans People](#)

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