Gender dysphoria and transitioning

Gender dysphoria is when someone experiences discomfort or distress because their gender identity is different from their biological sex. It can start from a very young age. This could include things like not wanting to wear masculine or feminine clothing for example. Older children may feel anxious or uncomfortable about the changes that happen during puberty, such as starting periods or things like voice deepening.

In 2020/21 Childline delivered over 5,000 sessions about sexuality and gender identity.[1](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/sex-relationships/gender-identity/#pageref45880)Common themes for children contacting Childline with questions about their gender identity are anxiety about their feelings, the fear of not being accepted, the lack of available support and the time that it takes for them to access services.

Some young people who experience gender dysphoria may decide to transition. Transitioning is the journey someone takes from presenting themselves as the gender they were born into, to presenting themselves as the gender they feel they are. Young people or children may choose to do this in different ways and at different stages depending on what they feel comfortable with. Some young people may choose to do this privately or just with close friends and family before coming out more publicly.

A child or young person’s transition may involve changing the way they look or dress. For example, they might want to wear make-up or shave their facial hair. Some children may also want to visit the doctor to get support or discuss their options for medical treatment. Your GP should be able to provide advice and guidance about what options are available to support children and families.