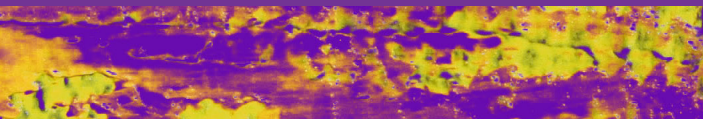




**Where
to start:
Parenting
Intersex
Children**

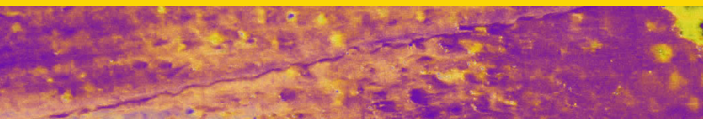


WHAT IS INTERSEX?

When we think about the sex that people are born with, what we are actually thinking about is a set of biological characteristics understood to be male or female. These include genitals, gonads, chromosomes, and hormones. Some children can be born with differences in these characteristics, meaning certain traits may be absent or different even if other traits suggest they are male or female.

There are over forty different ways in which children can be born with diverse sex characteristics, and many different terms exist in describing these variations. The term “intersex” is preferred by those who live with a variation. Disorder / Differences of Sex Development tends to be preferred by doctors and very rarely some people will use the outdated diagnosis of “Hermaphroditism”. There are many more diagnostic terms and sometimes it might require your own research to find out if your child is intersex.

The most important thing to remember is that most types of intersex variations are benign. As long as a child has the freedom to make choices for themselves and health considerations are managed responsibly, there is nothing preventing your child from living a fulfilling life. While this might not have been what you expected or wanted for your child, it is with your love and support that we can start to break down the secrecy and stigma that has harmed intersex children for generations.



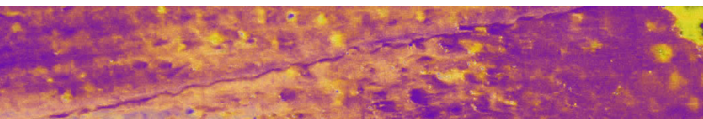
WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED FROM ME?

You will be asked to make many difficult decisions for your intersex child from the moment they are born. The single most important thing you can do is ensure that every decision you make is informed and mindful of the decisions your child may make for themselves in the future.

An important consideration is that being intersex does not mean that your child fits into a discrete third category. Statistically speaking, intersex children will grow up to become men or women, often in accordance with what is assigned at birth. But with higher rates of gender diversity than the general population, it is also important to be open to the idea that your child may grow up to reject what they were assigned at birth.

Many doctors will assign a gender based on what they think the dominant sex characteristics are, and encourage that divergent sex characteristics are altered through surgery or medication. When this happens, it's important to consider whether such treatments are urgent to the preservation of life or not. Medical intervention has permanent outcomes and may make it harder for an intersex person to make decisions for themselves in the future.

Whenever you do make a decision, it's important to ensure that you keep a record of the medical procedures that have taken place, and the information around those decisions. Medical records can be lost or destroyed, but are important to helping your intersex child manage their health needs later on.



MEDICAL CURIOSITY

Due to the rarity of intersex variations, you may be encouraged to have medical photography taken of your child, or for your child to be analysed on “rounds”. These often-traumatic practices usually take place only to sate doctor’s curiosity and represent another way consent is subverted.

TRAUMA

The experiences you and your child may have in dealing with doctors and hospitals can leave you with complex feelings and trauma after the fact. There may be value in finding a psychologist who can work with your child and your family.

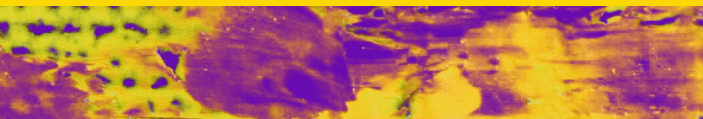
PEER SUPPORT

Engaging with peer support programs can help inform the decisions that you make for your child based on the experiences of intersex adults. These groups can also provide support and positive role models for your child when they are ready to learn about being intersex.

AGA IS PROUD TO WORK CLOSELY WITH INTERSEX HUMAN RIGHTS AUSTRALIA AND INTERSEX PEER SUPPORT AUSTRALIA TO BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS IN AUSTRALIA.

For more information about intersex, including human rights and advocacy: www.ihra.org.au

For peer support information and programs across Australia: www.isupport.org.au



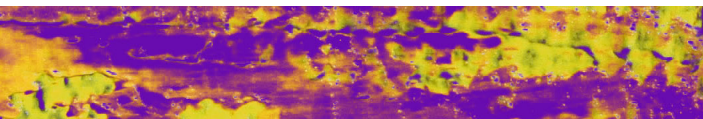
QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

- ▶ Is this treatment necessary to preserve my child's life?
- ▶ What are all of the available options for my child?
- ▶ What would it mean to delay this treatment?
- ▶ How could we monitor this instead?
- ▶ What if my child wants something different later in life?

WHAT IF MY CHILD CHOOSES DIFFERENTLY?

The pressure to get everything right the first time can be immense. It can be terrifying to consider what happens next if a child chooses differently for themselves. It's likely you made the best decisions you could with the information that you had and it's not your fault.

If an intersex child comes out as feeling differently about themselves, wanting to change their name, or how they dress, or how they identify. That's not your failure, but new information that can help you make better decisions for your intersex child. Many peer support groups can help you through the next steps as well.



WHAT WE OFFER

AGA offers a number of intersex services led by a project worker with lived intersex experience. Our advocacy is grounded in the needs of the intersex community as laid out by the Darlington Consensus Statement. To that end, we offer the following services to the ACT and surrounds:

Intersex Point: A peer support program run once a month at AGA House for intersex people and those with intersex people in their lives.

Intersex Led Education: Intersex components of our education and training services are informed by best practice and lived experience.

Intersex Resources: AGA maintains a collection of intersex based resources available to its members.

TO FIND OUT MORE

Email: support@genderrights.org.au

Phone: (02) 6162 1924

Web: www.genderrights.org.au



AGA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land.

