**‘X’ Option for Legal Sex and Sex Assigned at Birth  
Frequently Asked Questions for Patients**

Northwestern Medicine asks patients about their legal sex and sex assigned at birth in order to provide more patient-centered care. Read below to learn more about these questions and how the information will be used.

**What is “legal sex”?**

The sex (male, female or X) recorded on an individual’s state or government identification documents.

**What is “sex assigned at birth”?**

The sex (male, female, intersex or X) assigned to an infant at birth, most often based on an infant’s anatomical and other biological characteristics. Sex assigned at birth is often recorded on a birth certificate.

**What does “X” mean?**

X is a response option that designates a legal sex other than male or female on government identification documents, such as driver’s licenses, passports and birth certificates. It is most commonly used by people who are intersex, transgender or nonbinary.

**Why do health centers ask patients for their legal sex and sex assigned at birth?**

Knowing each patient’s legal sex and sex assigned at birth helps us to better address all of their health needs. With this information, we can send out the correct types of health reminders and provide the right kind of care for each patient.

**What if I don’t want to share this information?**

* We are required to include legal sex in your medical record. This information should match the sex on your identification documents.
* You can choose not to share your sex assigned at birth. You can select, “Choose not to disclose.” A care team member may ask you about this privately. You do not have to give them this information, but it will help us care for you. It can also help prevent you from getting health reminders that may not be right for you.

**Who will see this information?**

Your care team will see this information. It may become part of your electronic health record. If you have concerns about this, talk to a care team member.

**How will my information be protected?**

Like all health information, your sex information is confidential and protected by law. If you are under 18 years old, your parent/guardian may have access to this information. Anyone with proxy access to a patient’s medical records may have access as well. If you have any concerns, talk to a care team member.

**How will this information be used?**

Your care team will use this information to better understand and meet your healthcare needs. We also use this data to identify gaps in care or services across different populations.

**What are pronouns?**

Pronouns are the words people use when they are referring to you without using your name. Examples of pronouns are:

* She/her
* He/him
* They/them

**Why do health centers ask about pronouns?**  
Trust is important for providing excellent care. We want to make sure every patient feels comfortable and respected here. We do not want to assume anyone’s pronouns. Just like using the right name, using the right pronouns makes patients feel seen and heard.

**What is a preferred name?**

A preferred name is the name that a person wants us to use for them. This may not be the same name as the legal name on their identification documents. For example, someone’s driver’s license may say their legal name is John Michael Smith, but the name they want us to use is “Mike.”

**Why do health centers ask about preferred name?**

Like using the right pronouns, using the right name helps patients feel comfortable and respected. It is important for building a trusting relationship.