

## FAQ on Gender Identity Disorder (Dysphoria) and "Sex Change" Operations

### What is the issue?

Sex-change operations are not necessarily new; the first occurred in 1953 (Christine Jorgensen). But more and more people are seeking such operations now. Therefore, Catholic and Christian institutions continue to address the issues of morality of sex-change operations since such actions may become part of mandatory insurance coverage, or employment in Catholic schools, or legislative mandates requiring Catholic hospitals to perform such procedures.

### What is a sex-change operation?

A typical sex-change operation is two-pronged. First, the person undergoes rather extensive psychological testing. Then he or she is placed on a hormonal regimen, and then, he or she undergoes surgery where the (original) genitalia are removed and replaced with the desired genitalia. A sex-change operation invariably renders the person infertile. It should be noted that the hormonal regimen continues the rest of the person's life, so that the secondary sexual characteristics can be maintained.

A sex-change operation should be distinguished from certain procedures performed on sexually ambiguous persons, for example, those suffering from congenital adrenal hyperplasia (a species of which is androgen insensitivity syndrome) or some other congenital cause of mixed sexual identity. These disorders present ambiguous sexual identity and certain operations done to confirm a person in the "dominant" sex aims to correct a pathological condition. Such operations should not be thought of as *changing* a person's sex, but rather confirming what is originally ambiguous.

### What is immoral about a sex-change operation?

Properly understood, a person cannot change his or her sexual identity. For persons not suffering the disorders mentioned above (e.g., hermaphroditism) a person is either male or female. A person is the unity of soul and body, and 'soul' should be understood not as an immaterial self, but as that which makes the body be what it is, namely, a human person. We are either male or female persons, and nothing can change that. A person can mutilate his or her genitals, but cannot change his or her sex. Changing one's sex is fundamentally impossible; these procedures are fundamentally acts of mutilation. [The DNA remains, only the exterior is changed.]

Mutilation results in a person being rendered impotent or sterile and dependent for the rest of one's life on a hormonal regimen which makes one appear to be other than what he or she is. There is nothing wrong with the genitalia of persons seeking such operations. But they are removed in order to conform to the person's subjective belief about who he or she wants to be. Doing violence to one's body when there is nothing wrong with it is an unjustifiable mutilation. Furthermore, seeking such a mutilation manifests a self-hatred inconsistent with the charity we owe to ourselves. Persons seeking such operations are clearly uncomfortable with who they *really* are. Loving such persons properly demands addressing the beliefs and self-understanding that give rise to this fundamental rejection of self.

(SR: <https://www.ncbcenter.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions/gender-identity-disorder-and-sex-change-operations/>)