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

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 we ask patients for their legal sex and sex assigned at birth?**

Learning about the legal sex and sex assigned at birth of our patients helps us to address patients’ anatomical health needs, send out correct health reminders, and coordinate appropriate and responsive care that focuses on each patient’s specific needs. It also allows us to better understand the populations we are serving.

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

* We are required to record **legal sex** in the patient’s medical record. This information should match the sex on their identification documents. To help prevent confusion and billing errors, it should also match what their insurer has on file.
* We are not required to record **sex assigned at birth**. Patients can select “Choose not to disclose.” A care team member may ask them about this privately, and patients may feel more comfortable talking about this with a clinician. While this information is not required, it is helpful to ensure correct patient care, and can help prevent patients from receiving unnecessary health reminders that may not be applicable to them.

**Who will see this information?**

A patient’s healthcare team will see this information, and it may become part of their electronic health record. If patients have concerns, they should discuss them with a member of the care team.

**How will this information be protected?**

This information is confidential and protected by law, just like all health information. If patients are under 18 years old, their parent/guardian may have access to this information. Anyone with proxy access to a patient’s medical records may have access as well. If patients have concerns, they should share them with their care team.

**How will this information be used?**

Clinicians will use this information to better understand and meet patient healthcare needs. In addition, gathering this information from all patients allows Northwestern Medicine 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, but not using your name. Examples of pronouns:

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

**Why do we ask about pronouns?**  
Trust is important for providing excellent care. We want to make sure every patient feels comfortable and respected. Just like using the right name, using the right pronouns makes patients feel seen and heard. Assuming someone’s pronouns can lead to embarrassing and disrespectful situations.

**What is a preferred name?**

A preferred name is the name that a person typically uses and prefers to be addressed by. 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 that they prefer to use is “Mike.” Mike in this example would be the person’s preferred name.

**Why do we 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.