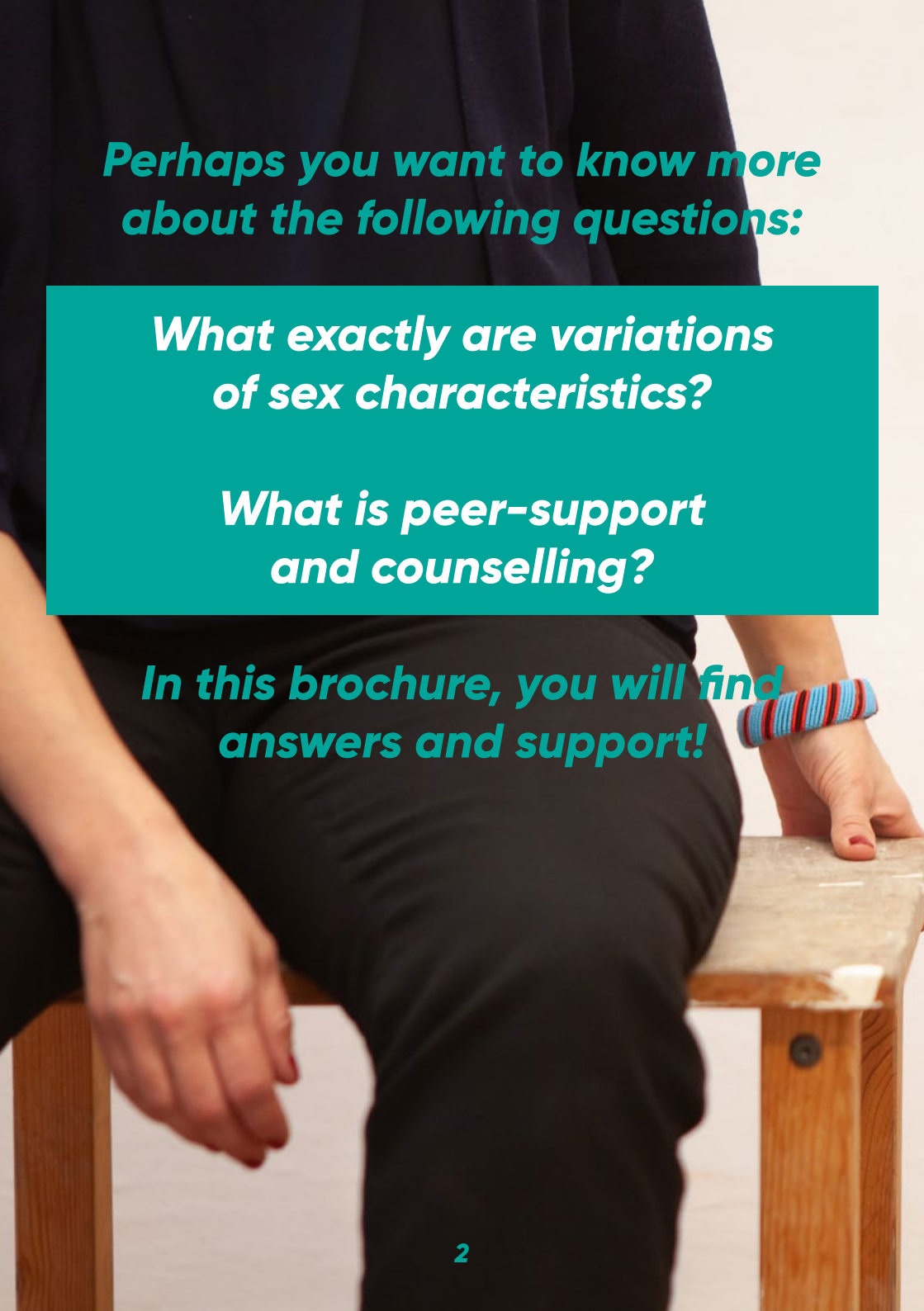
VAR.
GES
Beratungsstelle für Variationen
der Geschlechtsmerkmale



Peer-counselling

for people with variations of sex characteristics and their relatives

www.varges.at



Perhaps you want to know more about the following questions:

What exactly are variations of sex characteristics?

What is peer-support and counselling?

In this brochure, you will find answers and support!

People whose bodies do not develop in typically male or female ways have many questions — often without being able to talk to anyone about them.

Perhaps you have experienced doctors talking about your sex characteristics — possibly when you were very young. Perhaps you underwent examinations and received one or more diagnoses. Perhaps you were told, or it was decided, that you needed surgery or other medical interventions, or that you had to take hormones.

Perhaps some things were not explained to you in detail, your body was not spoken about in a positive way, you were asked uncomfortable questions, and you have the feeling that there is a secret surrounding it all

Perhaps you feel ashamed of your genitals because you notice that something is different. Perhaps you experience pain, fear, or discomfort, or perhaps you have little sensation in that area.

Perhaps your body changed during puberty in ways that have led you to hide it so that no one will notice. **Or** perhaps during puberty, you had to decide whether to grow up as a boy or a girl.

Perhaps you are unsure how to explain to those around you that your child's body differs from that of other girls or boys.

Perhaps you would like to connect with people who have received a similar diagnosis to you or your child and who can draw on a wealth of shared experiences

Perhaps your circumstances have changed, and you are looking at your variation of sex characteristics from a new perspective. You may be seeking advice on topics such as medical care, the desire to have children, chosen family, and more.

Perhaps you are wondering who you are — or perhaps you know exactly who you are, but the world around you tells you something different...



About VSC

FIRST OF ALL ...
Every person is unique – and our physical sex characteristics also vary from one individual to another.

... BUT WHAT EXACTLY DOES THAT MEAN?

We refer to variations of sex characteristics (VSC) when these do not clearly correspond to the normative expectations of a female or male body.

Variations of sex characteristics (VSC) can affect primary sex characteristics (internal and external genitalia and gonads), chromosomal structures, and/or hormonal systems, as well as secondary sex characteristics (body hair, breast development, menstruation, voice change, body shape, etc.).

A VSC may be identified during pregnancy, immediately after birth, during childhood, during puberty, or even much later.

There are many terms that essentially mean the same thing (intersex, DSD, differences in sex development, etc.)—and there are many medical diagnoses that describe a VSC or may be associated with it:

- 17-Beta-dehydrogenase deficiency
- 5-alpha-reductase deficiency
- Aarskog syndrome
- CAH (adrenogenital syndrome / congenital adrenal hyperplasia)
- Alström syndrome
- Androgen biosynthesis disorders
- Androgen insensitivity syndrome of varying degrees (PAIS, CAIS)
- Anorchia
- Aromatase deficiency
- Börjeson-Forssman-Lehmann syndrome
- CHARGE syndrome
- Chimerism
- DAX1 mutation or duplication
- Diethylstilbestrol (DES)-induced forms
- Duogynon-induced or other progestogen-induced forms
- Epispadias
- Bladder exstrophy
- Fröhlich syndrome
- Mixed gonadal dysgenesis
- Gordan-Overstreet syndrome
- Gynecomastia
- Hirsutism of unclear cause
- Cryptorchidism (undescended testicle)
- Hypogonadism
- Anterior pituitary insufficiency
- Hypospadias
- Kallmann syndrome
- Kennedy syndrome
- Klinefelter syndrome
- Laurence-Moon-Biedl-Bardet syndrome
- Leydig cell hypoplasia
- Meacham syndrome
- MRKH and MURCS
- Ovotesticular differences of sex development (ovotesticular DSD / intersexuality)
- Polyendocrine metabolic ovarian syndrome (PMOS)
- Persistent Müllerian duct syndrome
- Penile agenesis
- Poland syndrome
- Prader-Willi syndrome
- Sertoli-only syndrome
- SF1 mutation
- Smith-Lemli-Opitz syndrome
- SOX9 mutations
- 46,XX sex reversal (incl. SRY+, SOX9-dup.)
- StAR defect
- Swyer syndrome
- Turner syndrome
- WT1 mutations (incl. Denys-Drash, Frasier, WAGR syndrome)
- XX gonadal dysgenesis
- XXX syndrome
- XYY syndrome

(LIST IS INCOMPLETE!)



Peer Support and Counselling on Variations of Sex Characteristics (VSC)

"Peer" comes from English and means something like someone of equal standing" or "someone with similar experiences." Peer counselling is therefore a form of counselling in which the counsellors have personal experiences similar to those of the people seeking support.

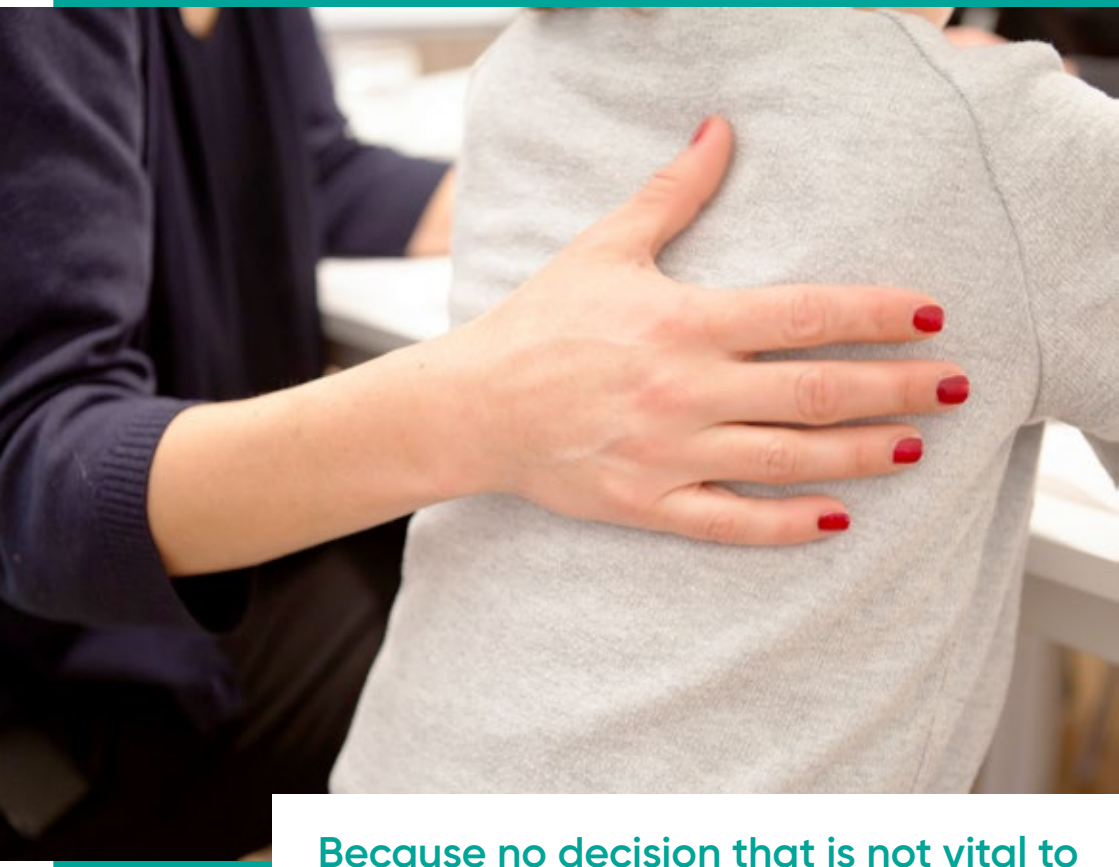
We support you in:

... finding a way of talking about body diversity, which is often treated as a taboo

... developing a positive way of relating to yourself, your child or a family member

... finding your own path between pathologization, treatment options and self-determination

We also have an extensive network of experts from a wide range of fields, including peer support groups, psychotherapy, medicine, law and others. This enables us to refer you to appropriate, informed and sensitive professionals and services for a wide variety of questions and challenges.



Because no decision that is not vital to your child's life needs to be made quickly or under pressure.

„It´s about our child…“

For parents and expectant parents in particular, their child's well-being is their greatest concern. This is especially true when they are given news or information they have never encountered before, raising many questions for them and their family.

An unexpected aspect of your child's development may feel overwhelming at first – but you are not alone.
You have time to explore these questions together, calmly and at your own pace.

At Var.Ges, we understand the medical, legal and social challenges that may arise in this context.

Many of our peer counsellors have been providing peer support for several years and have heard numerous personal stories along the way. In addition to our own experiences, we can therefore also draw on the experiences and insights of many other people.

About us



Var.Ges was founded in 2019 and is, to date, the only peer counselling service in Austria with an explicit focus on variations of sex characteristics (VSC). We are a team of experts by experience — people with variations of sex characteristics and parents of children with variations of sex characteristics.

All our counsellors have completed basic training in "Peer Counselling for Variations of Sex Characteristics" and stay informed about current developments through regular exchanges with one another. We also organise internal training sessions whenever needed.

You can contact us if you or a family member has a variation of sex characteristics, or if there is reason to suspect one, and you would like to connect with others and share experiences — regardless of whether a corresponding diagnosis has been made or any medical treatments have taken place.

Perhaps a medical professional has already recommended that you seek peer counselling. According to the Austrian Ministry of Health's 2019 Recommendations on Variations in Sex Development, medical professionals should refer people diagnosed with a variation in sex characteristics to peer counselling.

Peer Counseling:

Our peer counseling is available by phone, email, or in person and is free of charge.

Telephone: +43 732 28 700 210
email: beratung[at]varges.at

Variations of sex characteristics are not a disease in general. We decided to include the names of some diagnosis as a part of this brochure, because the name of a specific diagnosis is often the first thing, people with variations of sex characteristics hear at an appointment in the medical field.

Donations:

If you have the financial possibility, we kindly ask you to support our work with a donation:

Account: VIMÖ
IBAN: AT02 3473 2000 0019 4258
Reference: Peer Counseling

VIMÖ is an approved beneficiary organization. This means your donation is tax-deductible in Austria. For more information, visit vimoe.at/spenden

www.varges.at

Instagram: @varges.beratung

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Verein Intergeschlechtlicher Menschen Österreich
Graben 3, 4020 Linz
ZVR: 756342502