



TRANSVESTIC FETISHISM

INFORMATIONAL FACT SHEET

JANUARY 2012

What is Transvestic Fetishism?

- Transvestic Fetishism is a paraphilia, or sexual deviation, in which a heterosexual male dresses in female attire for the purpose of sexual arousal.
- The behavior is commonly referred to as “cross-dressing,” and men who engage in such behavior often are referred to as “transvestites.”

What features are associated with Transvestic Fetishism?

- The majority of men with Transvestic Fetishism are married.
- The associated sexual arousal stems from thoughts and fantasies about being female, and is not related to sexual attraction to the clothing itself.
- Most men with Transvestic Fetishism own women’s clothing and wear the garments solely for the purpose of sexual arousal; the clothing is removed after orgasm is achieved.
- Some cross-dressing men wear only a single item of women’s apparel (e.g., underwear) under their masculine attire, while others may dress entirely as a woman.
- Approximately 10% of all men frequently cross-dress for sexual purposes and approximately 25% of all men engage in the behavior occasionally.

What is NOT Transvestic Fetishism?

- Transvestic Fetishism is not associated with homosexuality.
- Only a small portion of cross-dressers have “gender dysphoria,” the desire to become a woman. Most transvestites do not want gender reassignment.
- Men with gender dysphoria dress as women to feel more comfortable with themselves and to relieve stress, in contrast to men with Transvestic Fetishism.
- This condition is primarily diagnosed in males; the number of women who experience sexual arousal from dressing in male attire is extremely small.

When does Transvestic Fetishism become a problem?

- The majority of men who engage in cross-dressing behavior do not meet the criteria for the diagnosis of Transvestic Fetishism because their behavior does not cause significant distress or impairment in their lives.
- Although there have been rare cases of serial killers or sexual murderers who engaged in Transvestic Fetishism, the behavior is not linked to violence or sexual aggression.