



## Tobacco Use Among LGBT Youth

Tobacco is the most serious yet preventable health crisis facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth in their teens and twenties

- ✓ 40.5% of LGB high school students actively use at least one type of tobacco product, a rate that is 33% higher than among heterosexual students.<sup>(1)</sup>
- ✓ 19.2% of LGB high school students smoke cigarettes, which is nearly double the rate of heterosexual students, while 31% of transgender youth smoke cigarettes.<sup>(1,2)</sup>
- ✓ LGBT youth are twice as likely to be daily smokers and more likely to use multiple tobacco products than are heterosexual youth.<sup>(1,3)</sup>

LGBT youth also use tobacco products at disparate rates

- ✓ **E-cigarettes:** 3 in 10 LGB youth currently use electronic vapor products like e-cigs, which is 25% higher than heterosexual youth. More than half of LGB youth have tried e-cigs.<sup>(1)</sup>
- ✓ **Hookah:** Black LGB youth use hookah at double the rate of their heterosexual peers, while white and Hispanic LGB youth use hookah at a 50% higher rate than their heterosexual peers.<sup>(5)</sup>
- ✓ **Cigars and clove cigarettes:** Black LGB youth use cigars and cloves at three times the rate of heterosexual black youth; multiracial LGB youth use cigars and cloves at a 60% higher rate than multiracial heterosexual youth.<sup>(5)</sup>

Tobacco-related health disparities follow LGBT youth throughout their lifetimes

- ✓ LGBT youth smokers have higher rates of acute respiratory illnesses (e.g., strep throat, sinus infection, and asthma) than other youth smokers.<sup>(6)</sup>
- ✓ High rates of LGBT youth smoking results in similarly high rates among adults.<sup>(7)</sup> Smoking is the most preventable cause of cancer and death,<sup>(8,9)</sup> killing 30,000+ LGBT people per year.<sup>(10)</sup>

## LGBT tobacco disparities are exacerbated by the discrimination LGBT youth face

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- ✓ Gay college students are more likely to smoke when they have to conceal their orientation.<sup>(11)</sup>
- ✓ Increased victimization of LGB youth is correlated with increased smoking.<sup>(12)</sup>
- ✓ In contrast, LGBT youth who live in more supportive communities (e.g., where schools have LGBT-friendly policies and student groups) face lower risk of smoking.<sup>(13)</sup>

## LGBT youth can break the cycle with proper support

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- ✓ LGBT people are less likely than others to intend to use Quitlines,<sup>(15)</sup> and only 28% use nicotine replacement therapy<sup>(14)</sup> even though it is generally covered by insurance.
- ✓ However, LGBT youth respond to targeted, appropriate messaging. A campaign at LGBT nightlife venues resulted in up to 48% reduced odds of smoking.<sup>(17)</sup>
- ✓ LGBT people who are comfortable asking their doctor for help are 80% more likely to prepare to quit smoking,<sup>(14)</sup> so healthcare providers can help end these disparities by reaching out to LGBT youth in a culturally-competent and inclusive way.<sup>(18)</sup>

References for this document can be found at:  
<http://hlthlink.lgbt/fact-sheets>

LGBT HealthLink, a program of CenterLink, is a community-driven network of experts and professionals enhancing LGBT health by reducing tobacco-, cancer-, and other health-disparities within our communities. We are one of eight CDC-funded cancer & tobacco disparity networks. We link people & information to promote adoption of best practices in health departments & community organization to reduce LGBT cancer & tobacco disparities.



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