

## ACCESS TO CARE AND RESOURCES

There are many resources for LGBT patients seeking medical care and advice. Here are a few you may be interested in.

**Want more information about LGBT health care?** The National LGBT Health Education Center has publications and resources for patients and providers: [www.lgbthealtheducation.org](http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org)

**Want more information about transgender health issues?** The Center of Excellence for Transgender Health has many resources: [www.transhealth.ucsf.edu](http://www.transhealth.ucsf.edu)

**Want information about health care organizations that demonstrate a commitment to LGBT health care?** The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) publishes a Health Equality Index yearly: [www.hrc.org/hei](http://www.hrc.org/hei)

**Want additional support for your friends or family?** Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) publishes lists of organizations it partners with and local groups for support, education, and advocacy: [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**I don't want anyone besides my provider to know that I'm gay/lesbian/bi/trans. Will this information be shared?**

Your provider will keep conversations you have confidential. Your health care provider is bound by laws and policies to keep your information private. If you are under 18, these laws will vary by state and policies may vary by medical practice. You can also ask your provider not to enter this information into your medical record.

**What if my provider uses the wrong terms or pronouns when referring to me or my spouse/partner?**

Providers may not always know what terms you prefer to use. Let them know how you describe yourself and your partner(s), and they should start to use those words.

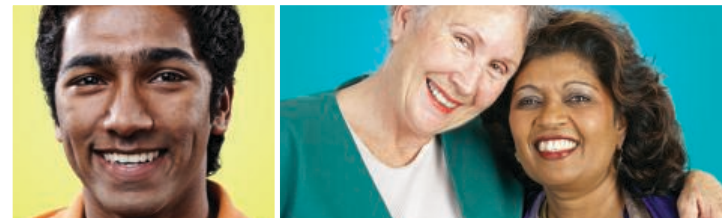
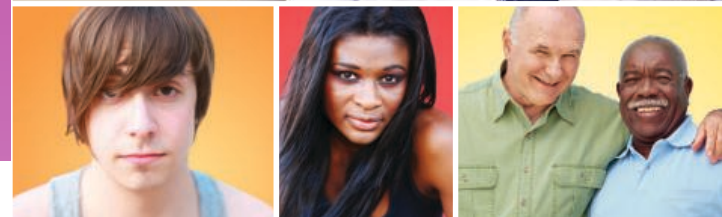
**What if I still don't feel comfortable coming out to my current provider?**

There are several ways to find a provider you connect with. To start, you can talk to friends or use the resources in this brochure. Finding a provider you are comfortable with is essential to your all-around health and wellness.

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# Do Ask, Do Tell:

Talking to your health care provider about being LGBT



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## COMING OUT TO YOUR PROVIDER

Coming out to your health care provider is an important step to being healthy. Many people are not aware that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people face unique health risks, such as higher smoking rates, a greater risk of suicide attempts, and a higher chance of getting certain sexually transmitted diseases. Talking with your provider can help you overcome these issues and access the care you need most. Being open about your sexual orientation, sexual behavior, and gender identity not only helps your provider, it helps you!

### Reasons to come out:

- Your provider can offer care that is personalized and most relevant to you.
- Your provider can offer referrals to specialists, like behavioral health providers and other wellness providers, who are welcoming to LGBT people.
- Your provider can be sensitive to current health trends that affect LGBT people.
- Health care is about the whole person. By being open with your provider, you allow him/her to provide you with comprehensive care that supports your mind, body and spirit.



## BEHAVIORAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

LGBT people often experience prejudice, stereotyping, and harassment or bullying by others. This kind of discrimination can be very stressful, which can put you at risk for depression, anxiety, substance abuse, feelings of loneliness, and even suicide. Being open not only about your sexual orientation and gender identity, but also about any substance use or mental health needs, allows your provider to give you the best possible care.

Exercise and healthy eating are important components of wellness for everyone. Physical health plays an important role in feeling emotionally healthy, too! Research has shown that LGBT people are more likely to smoke, lesbians are at higher risk for obesity, and some gay men struggle with poor body image. If you discuss these issues with your health care providers, they can advise you on healthy diets and self-image, smoking cessation, and exercise routines.

Lesbians, bisexual women, and some transgender people should also make sure they are getting routine gynecologic screenings, including Pap smears, and routine breast cancer screening.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Talking to your provider about your sexual health isn't easy. However, there are many benefits to discussing your sexual function and behaviors with a provider. Each person's needs will differ, but some of the sexual health issues that may be important to discuss are:

- Screening for STDs and HIV
- Getting vaccinated for HPV and hepatitis A and B
- Using condoms or other barrier methods
- Safer sex education and counseling
- Problems with sexual function or satisfaction
- Plans to adopt or conceive children

All LGBT people should feel comfortable talking to providers about family life issues, such as partner abuse (feeling safe at home), and living wills.

