



LGBT Wellness

Wellness is about being physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people have unique wellness needs because of the health disparities they face.

10 things LGBT people can do to improve their wellness

1 Research Insurance Options

LGBT people, particularly those of color, are less likely to have health insurance than heterosexual people, hindering access to care.^(1,2) Visit <http://out2enroll.org> to learn how to get insured.

2 Use Preventive Care

LGBT people underuse cancer preventive services such as HPV vaccination, as well as breast and cervical cancer screening.^(5,6) Most preventive care is covered by many insurance plans.

3 Stay Smoke-free

Cigarette smoking kills 30,000+ LGBT people a year,⁽⁹⁾ and causes many respiratory and health problems throughout the lifespan.⁽¹⁰⁾ Three in ten LGBT people smoke.⁽¹¹⁾ You can find a quitline and get help at <https://smokefree.gov/lgbt-and-smoking>.

4 Steer Clear of Substance Abuse

LGBT folks have higher levels of alcohol and drug use, which may be linked to experiencing discrimination.⁽¹⁴⁾ LGB youth are 25% more likely to drink, 50% more likely to use marijuana, twice as likely to use ecstasy and cocaine, and four times as likely to use heroin and meth compared with heterosexual youth.⁽¹⁵⁾ To find an LGBT friendly provider go to GLMA at <https://goo.gl/2VZvVg>. To find a treatment center near you go to SAMHSA at <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>.

5 Seek Mental Health Support

LGBT youth have elevated rates of suicide and frequently face bullying, sexual abuse, and other traumatic experiences that can carry through to adulthood.^(15,16) Learn more about mental health disparities and find resources at <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/LGBTQ>.

6 Adopt a Healthier Lifestyle

Lesbians are twice as likely as are heterosexual women to be overweight.^(17,18) Risk also may be increased in bisexual women.⁽¹⁹⁾ Maintaining a healthy weight and regular physical activity can prevent chronic health conditions, including some types of cancer.

7 Practice Safer Sex

Queer men and transgender women have increased risks of HIV infection.^(20,21) Learn safer sex practices at <http://tiny.cc/saferlgbt> and <http://tiny.cc/safertrans>.

8 Keep a Positive Body Image

Transgender youth are twice as likely as are cisgender youth to attempt suicide if they have a desire to change their weight.⁽²⁴⁾ Queer youth may have increased risks of eating disorders, because of the unique body image issues some face.⁽²⁵⁾ Love your body and talk to a healthcare provider if you have concerns.

9 Limit Your UV Exposure

Sexual minority men have at least 56% higher odds than heterosexual men of having skin cancer,⁽²⁶⁾ possibly as a result of tanning indoors and outside as a way to cope with negative body images.⁽²⁷⁾

10 Know Your Rights

You should feel safe talking to your healthcare providers about your health and wellness. If you're not comfortable with your current healthcare providers, you should find a new one if possible. Learn about your rights, privacy, and options at <http://healthcarebillofrights.org>.

References for this document can be found at:
<http://hlthlnk.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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