
Vanderbilt Program for **LGBTI HEALTH**

The Vanderbilt Program for LGBTI Health is an innovative effort to improve health care for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex patients and families. Connecting patients with caring, compassionate providers and cutting-edge medical resources, the Vanderbilt Program for LGBTI Health offers the quality health care that LGBTI patients and families need.

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VANDERBILT  UNIVERSITY
MEDICAL CENTER

Vanderbilt University is committed to principles
of equal opportunity and affirmative action.

A GUIDE FOR **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) Patients and Families**



Vanderbilt Program for **LGBTI HEALTH**

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VANDERBILT  UNIVERSITY
MEDICAL CENTER

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

- all patients will receive comprehensive, and compassionate care, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression
- you define your family

Understanding the Health Care Needs of the LGBTI Community

At Vanderbilt, we are committed to providing an individualized approach to care, taking into account the needs of each patient.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex patients have unique health care needs that may be overlooked, particularly if sexual orientation and gender identity or expression are hidden. This can affect both access to care and quality of the care received, resulting in preventable adverse health outcomes including greater risk of certain diseases and increased rates of suicide and depression.

When You Visit Us

BE HONEST WITH YOUR PROVIDER

It is our responsibility to provide you with comprehensive health care tailored to meet your needs. To do that, we need you to be open and honest with us about your sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

GIVE US FEEDBACK

Let us know how we are doing. Email us at LGBTI.health@vanderbilt.edu.

Your Unique Health Care Needs

LGBTI patients are at increased risk for a variety of medical conditions and issues.

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

LGBTI patients are more likely to have depression or anxiety, possibly due to violence, discrimination, or isolation.

SUICIDE

Members of the LGBTI community, especially adolescents, are at increased risk for suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts.

ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO ABUSE

LGBTI patients are more likely to drink or smoke, which can lead to liver disease, lung cancer, heart disease, and other chronic conditions.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Gay and bisexual men and bisexual women are more likely to abuse drugs such as marijuana, ecstasy, and amphetamines.

CANCER

Gay and bisexual men are at increased risk for anal cancers. Lesbian women are at increased risk for breast cancer.

HIV/STIs

Men who have sex with men are at increased risk for HIV/STIs. Women who have sex with women have higher rates of bacterial vaginosis.

HEPATITIS

Men who have sex with men are at increased risk for spreading hepatitis A and B viruses.

COMPLICATIONS FROM HORMONE THERAPY

Hormone therapy can have adverse effects for people, including transgender individuals.

Top 10 Transgender Health Concerns

Vanderbilt Program for LGBTI Health

Transgender persons are at increased risk for certain types of chronic diseases, cancers, and mental health problems. Below is a list of the key health concerns transgender persons should consider discussing with their doctor.

#1: Access to Health Care

Transgender persons may avoid medical care for fear of being rejected. Many have been turned away by health care providers or had other negative experiences. Not all providers know how to deal with specialized transgender issues. Often, transgender health services are not covered by insurance. For these reasons, transgender persons may not be able to access the care they need.

Transgender persons should find a personal doctor who understands transgender health issues.

#2: Hormones

Hormone therapy is often used to make a transgender person more masculine or feminine. But the use of hormones has risks. Testosterone can damage the liver, especially if taken in high doses or by mouth. Estrogen can increase blood pressure, blood glucose (sugar), and blood clotting. Anti-androgens, such as spironolactone, can lower blood pressure, disturb electrolytes, and dehydrate the body. Hormone use should always be supervised by a doctor.

Transgender persons wishing to use hormones should only do so under the supervision of a doctor who can prescribe an appropriate dose and monitor its effects.

#3: Cancer

Trans men who still have a uterus, ovaries, or breasts are at risk for cancer in these organs. Trans women are at risk for prostate cancer, though this risk is low. Cancers related to use of hormones are rare, but counseling is still needed.

Transgender persons should be screened for cancers of the reproductive organs.

#4: Injectable Silicone

Many transgender persons use silicone injections to enhance their appearance. The injection of silicon by non-medical persons is a dangerous practice that can lead to serious health problems. Silicone, when administered by someone who is not a doctor, can move through the body and disfigure it. Also, silicone injected outside of a health care setting is typically not medical grade, may be contaminated, and is often injected using shared needles, which can transmit hepatitis.

Transgender persons need to be counseled about the risks of injecting silicone.

#5: Substance Use

Transgender persons use substances at higher rates compared to others. Substances used include amphetamines including crystal meth, marijuana, ecstasy, and cocaine. Use of these drugs has been linked to higher rates of HIV transmission through impaired decision making during sex. Although the long-term effects of these substances are

unknown, evidence suggests that their prolonged use is likely to have serious negative health consequences.

Transgender persons should be screened for substance use and get appropriate education and risk-based counseling.

#6: Depression and Anxiety

Transgender persons have higher rates of depression and anxiety compared to others. These problems are often worse for those who do not have adequate social support or who are unable to express their gender identity. As a result, teenagers and young adults have an increased risk of suicide. However, culturally sensitive mental health services can help prevent and treat these problems.

Transgender persons should be screened for signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety and should seek appropriate mental health services provided as needed.

#7: Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Transgender persons are at risk for sexually transmitted diseases. These include infections for which there are effective cures (gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, pubic lice or crabs), as well as those for which treatments are more limited (HIV, hepatitis A, B, or C, human papilloma virus). Safe sex, including the use of barriers, is key to preventing STDs.

Transgender persons who are sexually active should be routinely screened for sexually transmitted diseases.

#8: Alcohol

Studies have shown that transgender persons have higher rates of alcohol abuse and dependence. Although limited alcohol use, such as one drink a day, may not be unhealthy, any use can be a problem for a transgender person with an alcohol-related disorder. Alcohol abuse is a common problem among transgender persons and can increase the risk for being injured or becoming the victim of a crime.

All transgender persons should be screened for alcohol dependence and abuse, and alcohol use should be limited.

#9: Tobacco

Transgender persons smoke and use tobacco products at much higher rates than others. This can lead to a number of serious health problems, including heart disease, high blood pressure, lung disease, and lung cancer.

Transgender persons should be screened for tobacco use and offered tobacco cessation programs.

#10: Heart Disease

Transgender persons are often at higher risk for heart disease because of hormone use, smoking, and obesity. All transgender persons should have their blood pressure and cholesterol checked as generally recommended. Also, transgender persons should learn about the signs and symptoms of heart disease and stroke.

Transgender persons should have their blood pressure checked at least once a year and their cholesterol screened at least every five years.

Top 10 Health Concerns for Lesbians

Vanderbilt Program for LGBTI Health

Women who have sex with women and lesbians are at increased risk for certain types of chronic diseases, cancers, and mental health problems. Below is a list of the key health concerns lesbians and women who have sex with women should consider discussing with their doctor.

#1: Breast Cancer

Women who have sex with women are at increased risk for breast cancer. Several risk factors contribute to this risk, including the fact that many lesbians do not get routine mammograms or do breast self-exams. This leads to preventable delays in detecting breast cancer.

Women who have sex with women should be screened for breast cancer as generally recommended, based on their personal and family medical history. They should also be shown how to do a breast self-exam.

#2: Gynecological (female-related) Cancers

Lesbians are at increased risk for certain types of gynecological cancers. Many women do not realize they should have a yearly gynecological exam, even if they are not having sex with men. These exams can help diagnose many forms of gynecologic cancers in their early stages.

Women who have sex with women should be screened for gynecological cancers every year.

#3: Obesity

Women who have sex with women are more likely to be obese than other women. Obesity can lead to heart disease, diabetes, and early death.

Women who have sex with women should be screened for obesity. They should have exercise and diet plans tailored for them.

#4: Substance Use

Lesbians abuse substances at higher rates compared to others. Substances used include amphetamines (including crystal meth), marijuana, ecstasy, and cocaine. Use of these drugs has been linked to higher rates of HIV transmission through impaired decision making during sex. Although the long-term effects are unknown, evidence suggests that their prolonged use of these substances is likely to have serious negative health consequences.

Women who have sex with women should be screened for substance use and get appropriate education and risk-based counseling.

#5: Depression and Anxiety

Women who have sex with women have higher rates of depression and anxiety compared to others. These problems are often worse for women who are closeted or don't have adequate

social support. As a result, lesbian teenagers and young adults have an increased risk of suicide. However, culturally sensitive mental health services can help prevent and treat these problems.

Women who have sex with women should be screened for signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety, and should seek appropriate mental health services as needed.

#6: Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Women who have sex with women are at risk for sexually transmitted diseases. These include infections for which there are effective cures (gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, pubic lice or crabs), as well as those for which treatments are more limited (HIV, hepatitis A, B, or C, human papilloma virus). Safe sex, including the use of barriers, is the key to preventing STDs.

Women who have sex with women who are sexually active should be routinely screened for sexually transmitted diseases.

#7: Colon Cancer

All women, including lesbians, are at risk for colon cancer. However, because many lesbians do not have access to cancer screening services, they may be at increased risk for death and other complications from this treatable disease. All lesbians should have regular colon cancer screenings.

Women who have sex with women should be screened for colon cancer as generally recommended, based on their personal and family medical history.

#8: Alcohol

Studies show that women who have sex with women have higher rates of alcohol abuse and dependence. Although limited alcohol use, such as one drink a day, may not be unhealthy, any use can be a problem for women with an alcohol-related disorder. Alcohol abuse is a common problem among lesbians and can increase the risk for being injured or becoming the victim of a crime.

All women who have sex with women should be screened for alcohol dependence and abuse, and alcohol use should be limited.

#9: Tobacco

Lesbians smoke and use tobacco products at much higher rates than others. This can lead to a number of serious health problems, including heart disease, high blood pressure, lung disease, and lung cancer.

Women who have sex with women should be screened for tobacco use and offered tobacco cessation programs.

#10: Heart Disease

Nearly half of all women will die from heart disease, which is largely preventable. Two of the most common risk factors for heart disease are smoking and obesity, and these are common problems among lesbians. All lesbians should have their blood pressure and cholesterol checked as generally recommended.

Women who have sex with women should have their blood pressure checked at least once a year and their cholesterol checked at least every 5 years.

Top 10 Health Concerns for Gay Men

Vanderbilt Program for LGBTI Health

Men who have sex with men and gay men are at increased risk for certain types of chronic diseases, cancers, and mental health problems. Below is a list of the key health concerns gay men and men who have sex with men should consider discussing with their doctor.

#1: HIV/AIDS

Men who have sex with men continue to be at increased risk for HIV infection. Safe sex using condoms and non-petroleum-based lubricants has been proven to reduce the risk of both getting and transmitting HIV. Although HIV is now a disease that can be managed, there is still no cure, and preventing infection remains the key to ending the epidemic.

Men who have sex with men should get regular HIV tests and appropriate risk-based counseling about safe sex practices and ways to reduce risk.

#2: Anal Papilloma

Gay men are at high risk for getting the human papilloma virus (HPV), which can cause anal papilloma and certain types of anal cancers. Some men may benefit from a vaccine to prevent HPV from being transmitted. Also, some health professionals recommend routine anal pap smears to screen for cancer. HPV can be treated, but it often comes back, and infections spread easily between sexual partners.

Men who have sex with men should be screened for anal papilloma. Gay men under age 27 should get the HPV vaccine.

#3: Hepatitis Immunization

Gay men are at increased risk for getting hepatitis, a disease of the liver. Hepatitis can cause serious health problems, including liver cancer, cirrhosis, liver failure, and even death. You can be immunized against two of the three most serious hepatitis viruses: A and B, and this is recommended for all gay men. Safe sex, which reduces the risk of transmission of all types of viral hepatitis, is the only way to prevent transmitting hepatitis C.

Men who have sex with men should be immunized against Hepatitis A & B.

#4: Substance Use

Gay men abuse substances at higher rates compared to others. Substances used include amyl nitrates (poppers), amphetamines (including crystal meth), marijuana, ecstasy, and cocaine. Use of these drugs has been linked to higher rates of HIV transmission through impaired decision making during sex. Although the long-term effects are unknown, evidence suggests that prolonged use of these substances is likely to have serious negative health consequences.

Men who have sex with men should be screened for substance use and get appropriate education and risk-based counseling.

#5: Depression and Anxiety

Men who have sex with men have higher rates of depression and anxiety compared to others.

These problems are often worse for men who are closeted or don't have adequate social support. As a result, gay teenagers and young adults have an increased risk of suicide. However, culturally sensitive mental health services can help prevent and treat these problems.

Men who have sex with men should be screened for signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety, and should seek appropriate mental health services as needed.

#6: Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Men who have sex with men are at risk for sexually transmitted diseases. These include infections for which there are effective cures (gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, pubic lice or crabs), as well as those for which treatments are more limited (HIV, hepatitis A, B, or C, human papilloma virus). Safe sex, including the use of condoms, is key to preventing STDs.

Men who have sex with men who are sexually active should be routinely screened for sexually transmitted diseases.

#7: Prostate, Testicular, and Colon Cancer

All men, including gay men, are at risk for prostate, testicular, and colon cancer. However, because many gay men do not have access to cancer screening services, they may be at increased risk for death and other complications from these treatable diseases. All gay men should have regular prostate, testicular, and colon cancer screenings.

Men who have sex with men should be screened for prostate, testicular, and colon cancer as generally recommended, based on their personal and family medical history.

#8: Alcohol

Studies show that men who have sex with men have higher rates of alcohol abuse and dependence. Although limited alcohol use, such as one drink a day, may not be unhealthy, any use can be a problem for men with an alcohol-related disorder. Alcohol abuse is a common problem among gay men and can increase the risk for being injured or becoming the victim of a crime.

All men who have sex with men should be screened for alcohol dependence and abuse, and alcohol use should be limited.

#9: Tobacco

Gay men smoke and use tobacco products at much higher rates than others. This can lead to a number of serious health problems, including heart disease, high blood pressure, lung disease, and lung cancer.

Men who have sex with men should be screened for tobacco use and offered tobacco cessation programs.

#10: Body image problems and obesity

Men who have sex with men are more likely to have body image problems than others. This includes higher rates of eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Also, using anabolic steroids and nutritional supplements can be unhealthy. Obesity is also a problem among some gay men, and this can lead to heart disease and diabetes.

Men who have sex with men should be screened for body image disorders, use of anabolic steroids, and obesity. Tailored exercise and nutritional guidance should be provided.

Focus on Mental Health

Vanderbilt Program for LGBTI Health

Mental health is a state of psychological well-being. It involves how we think, feel, and act as we cope with life, how we manage stress and interact with others, and how we make life decisions. For several reasons, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community suffers from poorer overall mental health compared to heterosexuals.

Why do members of the LGBTI community have more mental health concerns?

Members of the LGBTI community may

- Have to cope with stigma, discrimination, or violence
- Have negative feelings about themselves because of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Feel isolated or lonely
- Feel that they must hide their sexual orientation or gender identity.

What are the most common LGBTI mental health issues?

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Substance abuse
- Thinking about or attempting suicide.

Depression

Depression is when feelings of sadness, loss, guilt, or anger interfere with everyday life for long periods of time. Lesbian women are 2 times more likely and gay men are 3 times more likely to have depression compared to heterosexuals.

Symptoms of depression include:

- Feeling agitated, restless, or irritable
- Changes in appetite, concentration, sleep, or energy
- Feeling hopeless, worthless, guilty, or self-hating
- Losing interest or pleasure in doing things you once enjoyed
- Thinking about death or suicide.

Anxiety

Anxiety is when constant worrying interferes with everyday life.

Symptoms of anxiety include:

- Feeling restless or edgy
- Tiring easily
- Having trouble concentrating or feeling as if your mind is going blank

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- Feeling irritable
- Having tense or tight muscles
- Having trouble sleeping.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

PTSD can occur after experiencing a traumatic event involving the threat of injury or death.

Symptoms of PTSD include:

- Reliving the traumatic event through flashbacks, upsetting memories, or nightmares
- Feeling detached or numb from feeling
- Lack of interest in normal activities
- Difficulty concentrating
- Being startled easily
- Feeling more aware, irritable, or angry.

Substance abuse

Substance abuse refers to the unhealthy use of illegal or prescription drugs. Lesbian and bisexual women have higher rates of nicotine and alcohol use throughout their lives. Gay men are more likely to smoke and use stimulant drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamine.

Symptoms of substance abuse include:

- Using one or more substances on a regular basis
- Increasing use of substances to feel the same high
- Planning activities involving substance use in advance

- Lying to or avoiding friends or family to use substances
- Major changes in mood or behavior
- Frequent hangovers or blackouts

Thinking about or attempting suicide

Depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse can all contribute to an increased risk of suicide. Over half of adolescent lesbian and bisexual women and nearly 3 in 10 adolescent gay and bisexual men have attempted suicide.

Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital

Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital serves patients with depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance abuse, and other problems. Our patients receive compassionate, personalized, world-class care that focuses on the whole person. For more information, call (615) 327-7000 or (800) 365-2270, or visit our website at www.vanderbilthealth.com/psychiatrichospital.

Focus on Heart Disease and Obesity

Vanderbilt Program for LGBTI Health

Heart disease and diseases related to obesity are the leading causes of death in the United States. Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community tend to have higher rates of obesity and heart disease than the general population.

What is heart disease?

The most common type of preventable heart disease in the United States is coronary artery disease (CAD). CAD happens when a sticky substance called plaque builds up in the blood vessels that bring blood to the heart and other parts of the body. As the plaque builds up, the blood vessels become narrower. This makes it harder for blood to flow. Unless treated, CAD can lead to a number of problems, including heart attack and stroke.

Risk factors for heart disease include:

- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Being overweight or obese
- Poor diet
- Physical inactivity
- Alcohol use.

What is obesity?

Being overweight means that you weigh more than what is generally considered healthy. If your weight is especially high in relation to your height, we say that you are obese.

Being obese can lead to a number of health problems, including:

- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Arthritis
- Stroke.

Why is the LGBTI community at greater risk?

The LGBTI community has more risk factors for heart disease than the general population. For example, gay and bisexual men are more likely to smoke and use drugs. Lesbian and bisexual women are more likely to be overweight or obese and to smoke. Because of their sexual orientation and gender identity, members of the LGBTI community may experience discrimination and violence and may generally have more stress. This can lead to higher blood pressure and other problems.

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What can I do?

There are many things you can do to lower your risk of heart disease:

- Be more active.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Eat fewer foods high in fat and sugar.
- Lose weight.
- Quit smoking.

Vanderbilt Heart

The Vanderbilt Heart team is one of the best in the country. Our doctors and staff treat patients with all kinds of cardiovascular diseases, including very complex cases. We offer a wide range of services in one location. Our patients can expect world-class care that's convenient and tailored to their needs. For more information, visit our website at www.vanderbilthealth.com/heart.

Focus on Cancer

Vanderbilt Program for LGBTI Health

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. While the causes of cancer are similar for everyone, the LGBTI community may have higher rates of certain types of cancer because of social habits or poor access to comprehensive health care.

Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is the 3rd most common type of cancer in women. It is almost always caused by human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV is a common virus spread through sexual intercourse, including intercourse between women.

Lesbian and bisexual women may be at greater risk for cervical cancer because they are more likely to:

- Smoke
- Use alcohol
- Not give birth until after age 30 or have biological children at all
- Eat a high fat diet and be overweight.

Lesbian and bisexual women may also have poorer screening rates. As a result, cancers may not be found until they are harder to treat. Lesbian, bisexual women, and transgender men with a cervix should be screened regularly

for cancer. They should also consider being vaccinated against HPV. For more information, visit the Vanderbilt Ingram Cancer Center at www.vanderbilthealth.com/cancer.

Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is a common form of cancer in women. As with cervical cancer, lesbian and bisexual women may be at greater risk for breast cancer because of higher rates of tobacco and alcohol use and obesity and lower rates of childbirth. This risk increases with age. Common symptoms of breast cancer include:

- A lump in a breast
- A change in the size or shape of a breast
- Leakage from a nipple.

Early detection is key because breast cancers in their early stages are more curable. However, symptoms of breast cancers do not always appear in the early stages. This is why screening is important. Lesbian and bisexual women should have mammograms every 1 to 2 years beginning in their 40s. Unfortunately, lesbian and bisexual women are less likely to be screened for breast cancer. For more information, visit the Vanderbilt Ingram Cancer Center at www.vanderbilthealth.com/cancer.

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Anal Cancer

The rate of anal cancer in men who have sex with men is 80 times higher than in heterosexual men. Risk factors for anal cancer can include:

- Receiving anal intercourse
- Having multiple unprotected sexual partners
- Being infected with human papilloma virus (HPV) or HIV
- Smoking.

There are currently no nationally recognized screening guidelines for anal cancer. However, it is recommended that men who have sex with men get anal pap smears every 1-3 years. They should also consider getting the HPV vaccine. For more information, visit the Vanderbilt Ingram Cancer Center at www.vanderbilthealth.com/cancer.