



## Cancer in LGBT Communities

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people are at an elevated risk for many types of cancer

- ✓ **Lung cancer:**  
32.8% of LGBT adults smoke, a rate that is 68% higher than other adults,<sup>(1)</sup> meaning LGBT adults likely have higher rates of smoking-related cancers, including lung cancer.
- ✓ **Anal cancer:**  
Men who have sex with men (MSM) and who are living with HIV have 30 times the anal cancer incidence of the U.S. male population as a whole. Even MSM who are not living with HIV have 3.4 times the incidence compared to the overall rate for U.S. men.<sup>(2,3)</sup>
- ✓ **Breast cancer:**  
Lesbian women have higher risk factors for breast cancer including higher rates of nulliparity (never having given birth), alcohol and tobacco use, and obesity.<sup>(4)</sup>
- ✓ **Skin cancer:**  
Sexual minority men have 50% higher odds of having skin cancer,<sup>(5)</sup> possibly as a result of tanning indoors and outside as a way to cope with negative body images.<sup>(6)</sup>

Cancer prevention is hindered because despite having higher risk factors for cancer, LGBT people are less likely to access care and utilize preventive services

- ✓ Lesbian women initiate the HPV vaccine at less than 1/3 the rate of heterosexual women.<sup>(7)</sup>
- ✓ Despite having higher rates of anal HPV and resulting cancers, gay and bisexual men are no more likely to be vaccinated than are heterosexual men.<sup>(2)</sup>
- ✓ LGTB people are half as likely to plan on using a quitline when they try to cease smoking.<sup>(8)</sup> 28% of transgender individuals have put off getting care due to fear of discrimination.<sup>(9)</sup>
- ✓ You Can: Create a warm and welcoming environment for LGBT patients to encourage use of care and educate patients on risks so that they utilize appropriate preventive services.

Cancer detection and diagnosis is only effective if patients (and providers) know what they should be screening for based on elevated risks in the LGBT community

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- ✓ 65% of gynecologists are uncomfortable screening transgender patients.<sup>(10)</sup> Transgender men are 11 times more likely than women to have an unsatisfactory pap test.<sup>(11)</sup>
- ✓ Although 86% of MSM are interested in having an anal pap test once it is offered, only 10% who are HIV-negative have had one,<sup>(12)</sup> and 77% don't know the anal pap test exists.<sup>(13)</sup>
- ✓ Bisexual women were only 55% as likely as heterosexual women to meet mammography guidelines, and transgender individuals were less than half as likely.<sup>(14)</sup>
- ✓ Lesbian and bisexual women and transgender men were 50% more likely to get routine cervical cancer screenings if they felt welcome or were out to their provider.<sup>(15)</sup>

Cancer treatment and survivorship are impacted by the discrimination and stress that LGBT patients may experience within and outside of the healthcare system

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- ✓ LGB survivors are 60% less likely than others to self-report good health.<sup>(16)</sup>
- ✓ LGB cancer survivors are twice as likely to smoke than are heterosexuals.<sup>(17)</sup>
- ✓ Solution: Treat LGBT patients and their families with respect throughout the process, and ensure that patients are comfortable getting the support they need during treatment and survivorship, such as access to LGBT-welcoming support groups and therapy.
- ✓ You can learn more about LGBT Cancer Survivorship at: [www.lgbthealthlink.org/CancerSurvivorship](http://www.lgbthealthlink.org/CancerSurvivorship)

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.

