

What to consider when choosing an LGBTQ+ friendly healthcare provider

To help ease some of the issues that come up when looking for a healthcare provider, we've come up with some tips for choosing an LGBTQ-inclusive healthcare provider.

The first and often most difficult part of looking for a healthcare provider is communication. One essential part of any good experience with a healthcare provider is to be open. Doctors, nurses, therapists, and other professionals treating you will be able to give you the best care possible if they know your sexual orientation and gender identity.

Tips for being open with your healthcare provider:

- **Know what to ask.** Learn more about the specific healthcare issues you face based on your gender and sexual identity. The truth is you do have unique health needs and concerns and it's important to educate providers about the specific care you need. Many health care providers don't fully understand the healthcare needs of the LGBTQ community, so it's important to take charge of your health by asking your healthcare provider about the health matters that apply to you.
- **Get informed.** Get familiar with the [top 10 health issues to discuss with your healthcare provider](#). While not all of these apply to everyone, it's still important to be aware of the issues.
- The following list will help you communicate even more effectively with your healthcare provider:

- **Bring a friend.** Many people have had bad experiences in the past. If you are feeling uneasy about seeing a new doctor, don't be afraid to bring a trusted friend or (chosen) family member.
- **Set time to talk to your provider when you're ready.** Set up a new patient visit or during the start of your next appointment, ask your doctor if they have time to talk and get a feel for them and their experience as it relates to LGBTQ care.
- **Advocate for your health.** You know your body and self the best! Share what you are experiencing as it relates to your health. If you don't tell your doctor what you are experiencing, they may not be able to give you the best care possible. If your healthcare provider doesn't have all the details around your physical / mental health, they're not able to make the best assessment and propose care that makes sense for you.

Tips for finding an LGBTQ-inclusive healthcare provider:

- **Ask for referrals.** Talk to your co-workers, friends, and (chosen) family members—especially those who are LGBTQ. Ask them who their doctors are. Find out if they know of any medical groups that are LGBTQ inclusive.
- **Call your health insurance carrier,** if you have one. Call your HMO or PPO to find out if they have a list of LGBT-inclusive doctors & services. If they don't have one, suggest that they create these resources.
- **Call your local community center.** Local organizations will often have a list of resources including LGBTQ-inclusive doctors and therapists. In some cities, if the center includes a clinic you can assume they have LGBTQ inclusive doctors.
- **Use the [GLMA provider directory](#).** GLMA has an online referral system of healthcare providers that have indicated they are committed to non-judgmental care for LGBTQ patients. You can also [search the OutList](#) and for a Trans-inclusive doctor, visit [WPATH](#).
- **Call ahead and ask questions.** When you call a medical group or doctor's office, you don't have to disclose your identity immediately. If anonymity makes you feel more comfortable, you can call ahead to ask if the healthcare provider(s) treat LGBTQ patients. There is no need to give your personal information when you have a general question.

- **Visit the office.** If you are unsure of a specific doctor or medical group, stop by the office. Look for signs of inclusion like LGBTQ magazines, speak with the front office, get a feel for the environment in the waiting room.
- **Talk to the doctor.** Often, you'll need to meet the doctor to get a real sense of how the experience will be. Arrange a meeting with your prospective doctor to ask questions, get a sense of their history with LGBTQ patients, and help put yourself at ease.

Through the experience, you want to be comfortable with the doctor and the level of care you are getting. If you're uncomfortable, move on. You deserve and are entitled to quality care, so if you don't feel comfortable with your current provider, it's ok to look for someone new - someone who sees, hears, and values your health just as you do. You can also search for plans that highlight LGBTQ-inclusive providers on [HealthSherpa.com](https://www.healthsherpa.com).