

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People

Who gets breast cancer?

Everyone is at risk for breast cancer. The two most common risk factors for breast cancer are:

- Being female
- Getting older

No matter your age, you should get to know how your breasts normally look and feel. If you notice any changes, see your health care provider.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual women — is there an increased risk?

Lesbian, gay and bisexual women have a greater risk of breast cancer than other women. This is not because of their sexual orientation though. It is linked to breast cancer risk factors that tend to be more common in these women. Examples include never having children or having them later in life. Lesbians also tend to have higher rates of obesity and alcohol use. Both increase breast cancer risk.

Screening rates

A recent study found similar rates of screening mammography among lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual women. Yet other findings have shown lesbian and bisexual women may not get routine screening tests. This may be due to a:

- Lack of health insurance
- Perceived low risk of breast cancer
- Past experience of discrimination or insensitivity from health care providers
- Low level of trust of providers



Seeing a health care provider on a regular basis for a clinical breast exam and mammogram are important for the early detection of breast cancer.

Some people may also avoid or delay seeing a provider. They may be afraid of being treated poorly due to their lifestyle. Once you find a provider you like, see him/her on a regular basis. These visits offer the chance to get routine health screenings and other medical care. Screening tests can find breast cancer early, when the chances of survival are highest.

Transgender people

At this time, data on the risk of breast cancer among transgender people is limited. If you are transgender, talk to your provider about your personal risk. Also talk about which screening tests are right for you.

It is important to find and see a provider regularly who is sensitive to your health needs. The resources on the back side of this fact sheet may help.

So what can I do?

There are many things you can do, such as:

- Choose a provider who makes you feel at ease.
 - Know your risk by learning about your family health history.
 - Talk to your provider about your personal risk.
 - Talk with your provider about which screening tests are right for you if you are at a higher risk.
 - Have a mammogram every year starting at age 40 if you are at average risk.
 - Have a clinical breast exam at least every 3 years starting at age 20, and every year starting at age 40.
- Sign up for your screening reminder at komen.org/reminder
 - Know how your breasts normally look and feel and report any changes to your provider.
 - Make healthy lifestyle choices — maintain a healthy weight, get regular exercise, limit alcohol intake and menopausal hormone use (postmenopausal hormones) and breastfeed, if you can.
 - Contact an organization about lesbian and gay health concerns.

Resources

Susan G. Komen®
1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)
www.komen.org

Gay and Lesbian Medical Association
202-600-8037
www.glma.org

Lesbian Health and Research Center
415-502-5209
www.lesbianhealthinfo.org

The Mautner Project of Whitman-Walker Health
202-745-7000
www.whitman-walker.org/mautnerproject

National LGBT Cancer Network
212-675-2633
www.cancer-network.org

Related fact sheets in this series:

- Breast Cancer Risk Factors
- Healthy Living
- Talking With Your Doctor

The above list of resources is only a suggested resource and is not a complete listing of breast cancer materials or information. The information contained herein is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional. Komen does not endorse, recommend or make any warranties or representations regarding the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, quality or non-infringement of any of the materials, products or information provided by the organizations referenced herein.