

# LET'S TALK LGBTQ+ HEALTH



## Health Challenges Facing the LGBTQ+ Community

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

- > Lesbian and bisexual women may be at increased risk for breast, cervical and ovarian cancer compared to heterosexual women
- > Men having sex with men (MSM) are at an increased risk for prostate, testicular, colon and anal cancer
- > Lesbian women are more likely to be obese than heterosexual women
- > People in the LGBTQ community are often harassed and may be subject to violence and experience domestic violence

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Find a primary care provider you are comfortable with and schedule annual appointments. Talk about breast, cervical, colorectal, prostate screenings and testing for sexually transmitted diseases along with preventive and prophylaxis services.

### SUBSTANCE USE

- > 3 in 10 LGBTQ+ people smoke and cigarette smoking kills over 30,000 LGBTQ+ individuals each year
- > Higher levels of alcohol and other drug use is found in the LGBTQ+ community
- > LGB youth are 25% more likely to use alcohol and 50% more likely to use cannabis
- > LGB youth are 2x as likely to use cocaine and ecstasy and 4x as likely to use meth and heroin

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Ask about your risk factors and how you can help prevent disease to reduce risk for certain health conditions.

## FACTS

- > The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer/questioning (LGBTQ) community consists of a broad range of community members and includes all races, ethnic and religious backgrounds and socio-economic status.
- > In New Jersey, 343,000 people aged 13+ identify as LGBTQ+ (2020).
- > LGBTQ+ individuals have unique health needs and experience an array of challenges due to stigma, discrimination, lack of access to appropriate care and heightened concern about confidentiality.
- > Improved health is achieved by understanding needs and receiving continuity of care.

### MENTAL HEALTH

- > LGBTQ+ people are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety
- > LGBTQ+ people have increased risks of eating disorders including bulimia and anorexia
- > LGBTQ+ youth have elevated rates of suicide
- > Social isolation, discrimination and societal and familial rejection are frequently experienced

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

What you discuss with your provider stays with your provider. Be as open as possible and share both your health and personal histories.

### SEXUAL HEALTH

- > Many sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, syphilis, hepatitis and herpes appear in higher rates in the LGBTQ+ community
- > HIV is 40x more common among men who have sex with men
- > Bisexual women have the highest rates of combining substance use with sex and report higher rates of risky sexual behavior

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Getting tested regularly for early detection and treatment. Seek pre and post exposure prophylaxis for HIV prevention.

## TRANSGENDER HEALTH

- > Ensure your health providers know your entire health history including medications and surgeries
- > Ask what to expect and watch for with hormone treatments
  - Transgender women should ask about estrogen and blood clots, swelling, blood pressure and blood sugar;
  - Transgender men should ask about blood tests to know if their testosterone dose is safe.
- > Talk with your health provider if you are seeking silicone injections; avoid silicone sold at “pumping parties” as it can be contaminated or move around inside your body.



### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Find a new provider if you are not feeling heard and/or respected.

## SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Social determinants (factors that affect health and well-being that are outside a person’s control) affecting the LGBTQ+ community includes:

- > Discrimination in access to healthcare and insurance, employment, housing, marriage, adoption and retirement benefits.
- > Lack of laws protecting against bullying in schools.
- > High rates of poverty, making it more difficult to afford health insurance or care, housing and higher education.
- > Inequities in benefits programs including disparities between reproductive treatments and adoption programs, which create a higher financial burden.



### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Advocate for yourself and speak up about your needs and concerns. Seek out LGBTQ+ support groups and/or attend events focused on LGBTQ+ issues to connect with others in the community.



## What to Look for in LGBTQ+ Affirming Health Care Providers/Practices

- A welcoming environment that includes signage, displays and materials about LGBTQ+ health concerns.
- A visible nondiscrimination statement.
- Offers liaisons for LGBTQ+ health services such as a health navigator to address concerns and guide you through the process of accessing care.
- Look for practices/systems of care that participate in the Healthcare Equality Index.



## Feeling Nervous or Overwhelmed About Finding Healthcare?

### Hunterdon Health is Committed to Providing Inclusive Services

The LGBTQ+ community must have access to health providers who understand their unique health needs/concerns and are committed to quality and inclusive health care that ultimately achieves better health outcomes.

A dedicated nurse care coordinator at Hunterdon Health is available to support LGBTQ+ community members and their families find compassionate care specific to their needs.

**Call 908-246-8309 to learn more about this service.**

### References:

<https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/lgbt/evidence-based-resources>

<https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/index.htm>

<https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma12-4684.pdf>

[https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality\\_maps/profile\\_state/NJ](https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality_maps/profile_state/NJ)

## Looking for Resources:

Visit Hunterdon Health website: <https://www.hunterdonhealth.org/>

For copies of this document and other resources, visit:

<https://www.hunterdonhealth.org/services/hunterdon-mercero-chronic-disease-coalition>

