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COMING OUT AS **BISEXUAL** TO YOUR DOCTOR



One of the keys to good health care is being open with your health care provider.

Doctors, nurses, physician assistants, psychotherapists and other professionals treating you need to know about your LGBTQ identity to give the best care possible. Yet surveys consistently show bisexual (or similar identities, including queer, pansexual or fluid) people are far less likely to disclose their sexual orientation to any medical professional.



Know your Health – Risk Factors for Bisexual People

The bisexual community faces striking rates of poor health outcomes ranging from cancer and obesity, to sexually transmitted infections and mental health problems. [Studies](#) suggest that bisexuals comprise nearly half of all people who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, making the bisexual population the single largest group within the LGBTQ community – yet, as a community, we are doing little to address the needs of bisexual people.

- **Research about bisexual adults has shown** that they are more likely than heterosexual adults to have general medical problems including high cholesterol and asthma, as well as elevated rates of smoking and alcohol use, which can heighten the risk for other health problems.

- **Bisexual women in particular** face significant health disparities compared with the general population of women in the United States – including higher rates of cancer, heart disease and obesity than compared to heterosexual women.
- **Although bisexual women** are more likely to have been tested for HIV than heterosexual women, they also report higher rates of behaviors that can increase the likelihood of HIV transmission.
- **Biphobia contributes to bisexual men being less likely to come out** and get tested for HIV, which has caused bisexual men to be disproportionately affected by HIV. Bisexual men also have elevated rates of HPV, which can lead to anal cancer.



- **Studies show that bisexual women suffer** severely compared to both lesbians and heterosexual women when it comes to mental and emotional well-being, including increased rates of emotional stress, eating disorders and suicidality.

Moreover, transgender people and people of color comprise large portions of the bisexual community – with [more than 40 percent](#) of LGBTQ people of color identifying as bisexual, and about [half of transgender people](#) describing their sexual orientation as bisexual or queer – making these groups vulnerable to further disparities that occur at the intersections of biphobia, racism and transphobia.

MORE THAN

40%

OF LGBTQ
PEOPLE OF COLOR
IDENTIFY AS
BISEXUAL

Why come out?

Many bisexual patients may wonder why they should come out, especially if they are in a relationship where someone may assume they are gay, lesbian or heterosexual. However, the bisexual community has unique health disparities that your medical care providers should know to best treat you:

- **Negative experiences in health care settings** can lead bisexual people to delay health care visits, change health care providers, avoid disclosing their sexuality in subsequent interactions with providers and rely on internet sources rather than a doctor for health information.
- **Visibility matters in many settings.** If it is safe and you feel confident enough, be open with your provider

and stand up for yourself. If your provider doesn't offer inclusive paperwork or assumes that you only have relationships with people of one gender, let them know that you are bisexual and that they should avoid making such assumptions. This not only helps you, but future bisexual patients.



Tips for Finding and Being Open with Health Care Providers:

Ask for referrals. Ask friends or local LGBTQ centers for the names of LGBTQ-friendly health care providers. You can also check one of the provider directories that can be found at [Queer Health Access](#).

- **Inquire by phone.** When you call to make an appointment, ask if the practice has any LGBTQ, and, especially, bisexual patients. If you're nervous about asking, remember you don't have to give your name during that initial call.
- **Bring a friend.** If you're uneasy about being open with your health care provider, consider asking a trusted friend to come with you.

- **Bring it up when you feel most comfortable.** Ask your doctor for a few minutes to chat while you're still fully clothed – maybe even before you're in the exam room.
- **Know what to ask.** Learn about the specific health care issues facing the bisexual community.
- **Find a culturally competent healthcare provider** using [HRC's Healthcare Equality Index](#), which measures LGBTQ-related policies and practices at U.S. hospitals. While individual providers at these facilities may not be fully versed on bisexual health, they are more likely to be LGBTQ-friendly than other providers.





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