Talking points for LGBT health

Indiana University Health
Top ten things lesbians should discuss with their healthcare provider

1. Breast cancer - Risk factors for breast cancer are commonly seen in lesbians. Surprisingly, lesbians are not very likely to get screening exams. This combination can sometimes mean that lesbians may not be diagnosed early when the disease is most curable.

2. Depression/anxiety – Discrimination may cause lesbians to experience constant stress. Women who need to hide their orientation or who have lost important emotional support because of their orientation usually experience a worsened form of stress. Living with this stress can lead to depression and anxiety.

3. Heart health – The leading cause of death for women is heart disease. The biggest risk factors for heart disease among lesbians are smoking and obesity. Yearly medical exams testing for high blood pressure, cholesterol problems, and diabetes is something that all lesbians need. Tips on quitting smoking, increasing physical activity, and controlling weight can be offered by health care providers.

4. Gynecological cancer – In comparison with straight women, lesbians have a higher risk for certain types of gynecological (GYN) cancers. In order to find cancers early and offer the best chance of cure, lesbians should participate in regular pelvic exams and pap tests.

5. Fitness – In comparison with heterosexual women, research shows that lesbians are prone to being overweight or obese. Higher rates of heart disease, cancers, and premature death are linked to obesity. Lesbians need knowledgeable and helpful advice about healthy living and eating, as well as healthy exercise.

6. Tobacco – According to research, lesbians use tobacco more often than heterosexual women. Smoking has been connected with higher rates of cancers, heart disease, and emphysema – three major causes of death among women.

7. Alcohol – More commonly seen among lesbians in comparison with other women are heavy drinking and binge drinking. Although one drink a day may be good for your heart, more than that can increase your risk of cancer, liver disease and other health problems.

8. Substance use – More often than heterosexual women, lesbians may use drugs more frequently. This can be caused by the stress from discrimination, sexism, and/or homophobia. Lesbians need encouragement to find healthy ways to manage and reduce stress.

9. Intimate partner violence – Divergent from most stereotypes, some lesbians experience violence in their intimate relationships. Lesbians need to be asked about violence as well as have access to welcoming counseling and shelters when desired.

10. Sexual health – Lesbians can likewise get the same sexually transmitted infections (STD’s) as heterosexual women. Skin-to-skin contact, mucus membrane contact, vaginal fluids, and menstrual blood can lead to the transmission of STD’s among lesbians.
Top ten things bisexuals should discuss with their healthcare provider

1. Come out to your healthcare provider – Your clinician needs to know that you are bisexual in order to provide you with the best care possible. This should cause him/her to ask specific questions about you and offer appropriate testing. Each time you see your clinician, inform him/her about who your current partners are as it may change the screening tests you clinician offers you.

2. HIV/AIDS and safe sex – Men who have sex with men are at a heightened risk of HIV infection, but the efficiency of safe sex in reducing the rate of HIV infection is one of the LGBT community's greatest success stories. If HIV positive, you need to be under the care of a good HIV provider. You should also confer and be conscious of what to do in the event that you are exposed to HIV – contacting your partner IMMEDIATELY following an exposure to explore your options. You should discuss options for prevention if you are in a relationship and one of you is positive. Although women who have sex with women have lower rates of HIV, if you have sex with a gay or bisexual man it is important to be aware of his/her HIV status and how to protect yourself.

3. Hepatitis immunization and screening – You are at an increased risk of sexually transmitted infection with the viruses that cause the serious condition of the liver known as hepatitis if you have sex with multiple partners (of any gender). Very severe long-term issues such as liver failure and liver cancer can be caused by these infections. Universal immunization for Hepatitis A Virus and Hepatitis B Virus is recommended for all sexually active people. Currently, the only means of protection for the very serious Hepatitis C Virus is safe sex. There are, however, new and more effective treatments for those who have the Hepatitis C infection.

4. Fitness (diet and exercise) – More commonly seen among bisexuals are problems with body image. Eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia nervosa are much more likely to be experienced by bisexuals. The use of substances such as anabolic steroids and other certain supplements can be detrimental to the health of the consumer. Other problems that affect many bisexuals are being overweight and being obese. Diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, breast cancer and various other health problems can be brought on being overweight.

5. Substance use/alcohol – Bisexuals may use substances more in comparison to the general population. These include a number of substances ranging from marijuana, amyl nitrate ("poppers"), Ecstasy, and amphetamines are all substances that bisexuals may use. The long-term effects of many of these substances are unknown. Your healthcare provider can connect you to help if your drug use is interfering with your work, school, or relationships.

6. Depression/anxiety – Depression and anxiety seem to affect bisexuals at a higher rate than in the general population. For the men who remain in the closet or who do not have sufficient social supports, the problem may be more severe. Many bisexuals keep their orientation and sexual behavior a secret from their family members and friends. Because of these concerns, adolescents and young adults may be at a particularly high risk of suicide. Mental health services that are culturally sensitive and targeted specifically at gay men may be more successful in the prevention, early finding, and treatment of these conditions.

7. STDs – Occurring at a higher rate in sexually active bisexuals are sexually transmitted diseases (STD's.) Some STD infections have effective treatment and are curable (syphilis, gonorrhea, Chlamydia, pubic lice), while others currently are untreatable (HIV, Hepatitis, Human Papilloma Virus, herpes, etc.) Without a doubt, safe sex reduces the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. You should be screened more frequently each year if the number of partners you have increases.

8. Prostate, testicular, breast, cervical and colon cancer – Bisexuals may be at risk for death by these cancers. At different times across the life cycle, screening for these cancers should occur. All bisexuals should undergo screening for these cancers as regularly as recommended for the general population.

9. Tobacco – Studies have shown that bisexuals use tobacco at a much higher rate than heterosexuals. Lung cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, and other serious illnesses are all tobacco related health problems. All gay men should be screened for and offered culturally sensitive prevention and cessation programs for tobacco use.

10. HPV (virus that causes warts and can lead to anal & cervical cancer) – Human papilloma virus (HPV) causes anal and genital warts. These infections have been thought to be playing a part in the increased rates of anal cancer among bisexual men. Routine screening with anal Pap Smears are now being recommended by some health professionals. Safe sex should be emphasized. There are ways to manage HPV, but recurrences of the warts are very common, and the rate at which the infection can spread between partners is very high. Individuals with a cervix should be instructed by their clinician to get routine pap smears.
Top ten things gay men should discuss with their healthcare provider

1. Come out to your healthcare provider – Your clinician should know that you are gay in order to provide you with the best care possible. This should prompt your clinician to ask specific questions about you and ultimately offer appropriate testing.

2. HIV/AIDS and safe sex – Men who have sex with men are at an increased risk for HIV infection, but the efficiency of safe sex in lowering the chance of HIV infection is one of the gay community’s great success stories. If you have tested positive for HIV infection, you need to be in the care of a good HIV provider. You should also discuss with your physician the steps to take in the event that you are exposed to HIV – contacting your provider IMMEDIATELY following the exposure to explore your options. If you are in a relationship where one of you is positive, discuss the precautionary options in regards to prevention.

3. Hepatitis immunization and screening – The viruses that cause the serious condition of the liver known as hepatitis poses a bigger threat to men who have sex with men. Long-term issues such as liver failure and liver cancer can be brought on by these infections. Universal immunization for Hepatitis A Virus and Hepatitis B Virus is recommended for all men who have sex with men. Currently, the only means of protection for the very serious Hepatitis C Virus is safe sex. There are, however, new and more effective treatments for those who have the Hepatitis C infection.

4. Fitness (diet and exercise) – More commonly seen among gay men are problems with body image. Eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia nervosa are also much more likely to be experienced by gay men. Substances such as anabolic steroids and other certain supplements are known to be dangerous. Obesity also affects many gay men and can lead to a number of health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

5. Substance use/alcohol – Gay men use substances at a higher rate the general population. These include a number of substances ranging from marijuana, amyl nitrate ("poppers"), Ecstasy, and amphetamines. The long-term effects of many of these substances are unknown. Your healthcare provider can connect you to help if your drug use is interfering with your work, school, or relationships.

6. Depression/anxiety - Depression and anxiety seem to affect gay men at a higher rate than the general population. For the men who remain in the closet or who do not have a sufficient social support system, the problem may be more severe. Because of these concerns, adolescents and young adults may be at a particularly high risk of suicide. Mental health services that are culturally sensitive and targeted specifically at gay men may be more successful in the prevention, early finding, and treatment of these conditions.

7. STDs – Sexually transmitted diseases (STD’s) occur in sexually active gay men at a high rate. Some STD infections have effective treatment and are curable (syphilis, gonorrhea, Chlamydia, pubic lice), while others currently are untreatable (HIV, Hepatitis, Human Papilloma Virus, herpes, etc.) Without a doubt, safe sex reduces the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. You should be screened more frequently each year if the number of partners you have increases.

8. Prostate, testicular and colon cancer – Gay men may be at a higher risk for death by prostate, testicular, or colon cancer. At different periods throughout life, screening for these cancers should occur. All gay men should undergo screening for these cancers as regularly as recommended for the general population.

9. Tobacco - Studies have shown that gay men use tobacco at a much higher rate than heterosexuals. Lung cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, and other serious illnesses are all tobacco related health problems. All gay men should be screened for and offered culturally sensitive prevention and cessation programs for tobacco use.

10. HPV (virus that causes warts and can lead to anal & cervical cancer) - Human papilloma virus (HPV) causes anal and genital warts. These infections have been thought to be playing a part in the increasing rates of anal cancer among gay men. Routine screening with anal Pap Smears are now being recommended by some health professionals. Safe sex should be emphasized. There are ways to manage HPV, but recurrences of the warts are very common, and the rate at which the infection can spread between partners is very high.
Top ten things transgender persons should discuss with their healthcare provider

1. Access to healthcare – Finding a healthcare provider who is knowledgeable on how to treat transgender people is not simple. It may be difficult to find someone who will consent to treat you. After finding someone to treat you, you may find out that your insurance will not pay for the treatment. If you are unsure if the cost of the treatment will be covered by insurance, ask your provider. If the cost will not be covered, ask for your bill to be reduced so that you are able to pay.

2. Health history – Being able to trust your health care provider is vital. The medicines that you have taken and the surgeries that you may have had are all things your provider needs to be aware of. He or she will be better able to give you the best treatment today after knowing what has happened to you in the past.

3. Hormones – Speak with your provider about hormone treatment. If you are a transgender woman, ask about estrogen and blood clots, swelling, high or low blood pressure and high blood sugar. If you are a transgender man, ask about the blood tests you will need to be sure your testosterone dose is safe. Be certain and take only the hormones prescribed by your provider.

4. Cardiovascular health – Hormone use, cigarette smoking, overweight, high blood pressure and diabetes put transgender persons at an enlarged risk for heart attack or stroke. Some transgender women may not report feelings of chest pain or trouble breathing out of fear that their provider may make them stop estrogen if they develop heart trouble. It is imperative that you tell your provider if you have these feelings.

5. Cancer – Although it is very rare to develop cancer due to hormone treatment, when you are seen for check-ups by your provider, you will be evaluated for the possibility of cancer. If your sex organs have not been removed, your provider will also check for possible signs of cancer in those areas as well.

6. STDs and safe sex – Transgender people, primarily young transgender people, may be participating in sexual activity. Transgender people may get a sexually transmitted disease, just like anyone else. Practicing safe sex is important to prevent becoming infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases. Ask your provider about safe sex practices.

7. Alcohol and tobacco – Transgender persons who drink alcohol may drink too much and risk damage to the liver or other organs. When taken together, alcohol and hormones may become more dangerous. Many transgender people smoke cigarettes, resulting in an increased risk of heart and lung disease, especially in persons taking hormones. Transgender persons should not smoke and should only drink small amounts, if at all.

8. Depression – It is common for transgender persons to become unhappy and depressed. When someone is depressed, he or she is unable to be happy regardless of the circumstance. Making bad choices and inflicting harm on oneself may be actions shown by someone who is depressed. If you are feeling sad or depressed, please talk with your provider or therapist about your feelings.

9. Injectable silicone – With the intent of looking feminine and beautiful without having to wait for the effects of estrogen, some transgender women expect injections of silicone to give them “instant curves.” Silicone sold at “pumping parties” by non-medical professionals, may move around in the tissue and result in ugly scars years later. Silicone is dangerous and should not be used.

10. Fitness (diet and exercise) – Many transgender people are overweight and do not exercise. A frequent exercise routine and a healthy diet are just as important for transgender people as for anyone else. It is necessary to be in good physical condition if you are preparing to have surgery. Being in good physical condition will help you to do well and respond well during and after surgery. Try to eat a healthy diet and exercise for at least twenty minutes three times a week.
The information contained in this brochure was quoted from:
GLMA – Guidelines for Care of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and