

BASIC TIP SHEET

Being open with your provider about your sexual orientation and gender identity is important in order to receive the best possible care. But many LGBTQ people are hesitant to share these aspects of themselves with their providers.

1. **Ask for referrals.** *Ask friends and other people you trust about LGBTQ affirming providers in your area.*
2. **Ask questions.** *Call or visit the provider's website to see if the provider has a nondiscrimination policy, displays a pride symbol on their website, or notes areas of interest and expertise in LGBTQ people and families. Although many organizations are well intentioned and/or have guidelines designed to protect LGBTQ clients, it's not safe to automatically assume potential providers will be knowledgeable or sympathetic to LGBTQ issues.*
3. **Choose a good time.** *Take a few minutes during your appointment to specifically talk about issues of importance and concern to you. Ask about your potential provider's views on the issues most relevant to your needs.*
4. **Bring a friend.** *Have a trusted friend accompany you to your appointment, or even be there in the room with you if you wish.*
5. **Come out.** *If it's appropriate, make sure to tell your provider whether you're sexually active (or thinking about becoming sexually active), and what types of partner(s) you have and see if your provider is open to talking about it. For example: If your doctor asks you about birth control, say something simple like, "I'm a lesbian, and I don't have sex with men." Or, "When I'm with men, I use XX birth control, but with women I use latex barriers."*
6. **Communicate.** *If the issue doesn't come up on its own... tell your doctor that you know how important open communication with a health care provider is. Say something like "it's important that you know I am a lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender person. Is there anything else relevant to my healthcare and my sexual orientation/gender identity we should talk about?"*
7. **Be a partner in your own well-being.** *Ask what other information you can offer so your provider can give you the best and most informed care possible.*
8. **Give a provider a trial run or do a phone interview first.** *Call and ask if they classify themselves as "LGBTQ affirming" and if they have other consumers who are LGBTQ. Since you don't need to disclose your name, this is a safe way to find out before you make an appointment. "Gay affirming", "LGBTQ affirming" is the current terminology for a provider who will affirm your LGBTQ identity. If they don't have other LGBTQ consumers, ask if they are comfortable treating LGBTQ consumers or if there's another provider in the practice (or elsewhere) they would recommend.*
9. *Many providers have their own religious or spiritual views. **If you feel that your provider is imposing their personal religious beliefs, you have the right to seek another provider.***