

One of the keys to good **healthcare** is being open with your **healthcare provider**.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are fundamental aspects of our physical and emotional make-up.

Doctors, nurses, physician assistants, psychotherapists and other professionals treating you need to know about your sexual orientation and gender identity to give the best care possible.

Yet surveys consistently show that many gay, lesbian and bisexual patients aren't open about their sexual orientation with healthcare providers, and transgender patients often face unique challenges finding competent care.

## Here are some tips to make finding and being open with healthcare providers a little easier:

-  **Ask for referrals.** Ask friends or local GLBT centers for the names of good GLBT-friendly healthcare providers. You can also check the listings at [www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org).
-  **Inquire by phone.** When you call to make an appointment, ask if the practice has any GLBT 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 healthcare 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 healthcare issues facing GLBT people.

## Tips for Healthcare Providers:

Maybe you're a healthcare provider. Or maybe you're a GLBT or straight person looking for information to help a provider's practice become more GLBT-inclusive. Either way, here are some tips for providers on how to create a welcoming environment.

 **Educate Yourself.** Learn about the specific health issues facing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

 **Be sensitive.** Make sure you and your staff know which pronouns are appropriate to use when referring to a transgender patient or same-sex couple.

 **Present visual cues.** Displaying an HRC equal sign or other GLBT-friendly emblem will demonstrate that your office is a safe space for all.

 **Revise client forms.** Allow options for male/female/transgender and use neutral terms like "partner" or "spouse" rather than "single," "married" or "divorced." Use "parent 1" and "parent 2" to include same-sex couples raising children.

 **Don't assume.** Avoid making assumptions about a patient based on their appearance. When taking a sexual history, ask, "Are your current or past sexual partners men, women or both?"

 **Listen attentively.** Be sensitive to the fact that this disclosure may be difficult for your patients.

## Learn More About GLBT Health Issues ...



[www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org)



[www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)



[www.mautnerproject.org](http://www.mautnerproject.org)

**And for more specific information on transgender health issues, please visit:**

visit [www.glma.org/trans](http://www.glma.org/trans)