

How To Find an LGBT Friendly Doctor or Health Care Provider

One of the main reasons lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender patients avoid going to the doctor is fear of discrimination or homophobia. When you go to a doctor, you are vulnerable. You should have someone who is LGBT friendly and knows about the specific health needs of LGBT patients. Here are some tips for finding an LGBT friendly doctor.

Here's How:

Ask Around

Talk to your friends, family members and co-workers – particularly those who are also LGBT. Ask them who their doctors are. Find out if they know a particular medical group to be gay and lesbian-friendly.

Call your HMO or Health Plan

Call the general information number of your HMO and ask for a list of gay-friendly doctors. If they don't have one, suggest that they put such a list together.

Call your local Gay & Lesbian Community Center

Many times gay and lesbian centers will have referral lists for gay-friendly doctors and therapists. If the community center has a clinic, you can be sure the doctors that work there are gay friendly!

Check out the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association

GLMA has an online referral system of healthcare providers who indicated a commitment to non-judgmental care of LGBT patients.

Call a clinic and ask questions

You may not get the doctor on the phone, but you should be able to talk to a nurse or physician's assistant. Find out if they have other LGBT patients. Is the staff trained in LGBT health issues? Also ask about insurance plans, fees and what services are offered. If you have a specific medical need, make sure their office is equipped to deal with it.

Visit the Clinic

What is the atmosphere? Are there gay and lesbian materials in the waiting area. Safe Zone posters? Non-discrimination policies posted? I felt at ease in my doctor's office when I saw a poster advertising a gay and lesbian relationships group.

Talk to the Doctor

Make an appointment just to talk to the medical provider. Find out if they have worked with LGBT patients before. Do they seem at ease in your presence? Are they able to talk openly about your sexuality? Do you feel you can be open with them?

Adapted from an article by Kathy Belge, How To Find a Lesbian-Friendly Doctor or Health Care Provider.
<http://lesbianlife.about.com/od/lesbianhealth/ht/Doctor.htm>