



Talking to Your Healthcare Team About Being Part of the LGBTQ+ Community.



Coming out to your care team

The better we know you, the better we can care for you.

Coming out to your care team is an important step to being healthy. Many people are not aware that members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) community face unique health risks, such as higher smoking rates, a greater risk of suicide attempts and a higher chance of getting certain sexually transmitted diseases. Talking with your care team can help you overcome these issues and access the care you need most. Being open about your sexual orientation, sexual behavior and gender identity not only helps your care team, it helps you!

Being open with your care team means they can:

- Offer care that is personalized and relevant to you.
- Offer referrals to specialists like behavioral health and other wellness experts who can meet your specific needs.
- Be sensitive to current health trends that affect the LGBTQ+ community.
- Provide you with comprehensive care that supports your mind, body and spirit.

Compassionate LGBTQ+ care, close to home

At Novant Health, diversity, inclusion and equity are part of our core values. We care about you, your family's health and providing our communities with the services needed to stay healthy. All are welcome here.

Our mission is to improve the health of our communities, one person at a time. Every detail of who you are matters to your health, and we want to know all about it so we can provide the best care for YOU.

Learn how we're personalizing care:
NovantHealth.org/TellUsMore.



Frequently asked questions

I don't want anyone besides my care team to know that I'm gay/lesbian/bi/trans/queer. Will this information be shared?

As with your other health information, any information shared will be kept confidential. Your care team and Novant Health are bound by laws and policies to keep your information private. If you are under 18, there are certain situations in which your parents can have access to this information in your medical record. You can also ask your care team members not to enter this information into your medical record.

What if a member of my care team uses the wrong terms or pronouns when referring to me or my spouse/partner/friend?

Members of your care team may not always know what terms you prefer to use. If your care team members don't ask which pronouns you would like them to use, let them know how you describe yourself and your partner(s). If you give your care team permission, they will include this information in your medical record so that others involved in your care will use the name and pronouns you prefer.

What if I still don't feel comfortable coming out to my care team?

There are several ways to find a care team you connect with. To start, you can talk to friends or use the resources in this brochure. Finding a care team you are comfortable with is essential to your health and wellness.

If you don't want to share your sexual orientation or gender identity while you are at an appointment, you can provide this information through your MyChart portal. Just go to your MyChart app or visit MyNovant.org.

Expect Remarkable.

Behavioral and physical health

Members of the LGBTQ+ community often experience prejudice, stereotyping, and harassment or bullying. This kind of discrimination can be very stressful, which can put you at risk for depression, anxiety, substance abuse, feelings of loneliness and even suicide. Being open, not only about your sexual orientation and gender identity, but about any substance use or mental health needs, allows your care team to give you the best possible care.

Exercise and healthy eating are important components of wellness for everyone. Physical health plays an important role in feeling emotionally healthy, too! Research has shown that LGBTQ+ community members are more likely to smoke, lesbians are at higher risk for obesity and some gay men struggle with poor body image. If you discuss these issues with your care team, they can advise you on healthy diets and self-image, smoking cessation and exercise routines.

Lesbians, bisexual women and some transgender people should also make sure they are getting routine gynecologic screenings, including Pap tests and routine breast cancer screening. Additionally, everyone in the LGBTQ+ community should have access to vaccines, screenings and other preventive care options.

Sexual and reproductive health

Talking to your care team about your sexual health isn't easy. However, there are many benefits to discussing your sexual function and behaviors with your doctor and others involved in your care. Each person's needs will differ, but some of the sexual health issues that may be important to discuss are:

- Screening for STDs and HIV prevention therapy (HIV PrEP)
- Getting vaccinated for HPV and hepatitis A and B
- Using condoms or other barrier methods
- Safer sex education and counseling
- Problems with sexual function or satisfaction
- Plans to adopt or conceive children

Novant Health is committed to providing inclusive care to all members of the LGBTQ+ community to ensure you feel comfortable talking to care team members about family life issues, such as partner abuse (feeling safe at home) and living wills.

Access to care and resources

There are many resources for LGBTQ+ patients seeking medical care and advice. Here are a few you may be interested in.

Want more information about LGBTQ+ healthcare?

The National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center has publications and resources for patients and providers: lgbthealtheducation.org.

Want more information about transgender health?

The Center of Excellence for Transgender Health has many resources: transhealth.ucsf.edu.

Want information about healthcare organizations that demonstrate a commitment to LGBTQ+ healthcare?

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) publishes a Healthcare Equality Index yearly: hrc.org/hei.

All Novant Health acute care facilities included in the 2022 survey received a scorecard of 100 and have been recognized as "Leaders in LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality."

Want to find LGBTQ+ affirming physicians and clinicians?

Use the "Find a provider" tool on the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association and World Professional Association for Transgender Health sites: glma.org and wpath.org.

Want additional support for your friends or family?

PFLAG, a national organization that unites people who are LGBTQ+ with families, friends and allies, publishes lists of organizations it partners with and local groups for support, education and advocacy: pflag.org.

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