

# LGBTQIA+ PATIENTS

## TOP 5 TIPS FOR CLINICIANS

Sexual and gender minorities may have a higher risk of certain cancer types. Obstacles within the LGBTQIA+ patient and clinician relationship can contribute to health inequities over time. Adjusting to the needs of each individual patient is important. Below are a few tips to get you started.

### 1 First Impressions Matter.

Introduce yourself with your [pronouns](#) and how you would like to be addressed, which can help patients feel more comfortable sharing and establish a rapport for an ongoing relationship. For example: "Hello, my name is Dr. Tim Jones, but you can also call me Tim. I use he/him/his pronouns. What is your name and how should I address you?"



### 2 Everyone Has a Story: Don't Make Assumptions.

Ask patients their name, what pronouns they use, and their gender identity. Be sure to document this so that you use language that affirms that person's identity. We habitually make assumptions based on what we see or hear, but our assumptions may be incorrect. Opening up with these questions can lead to other important questions, such as surgical history and current/past treatments, which can clarify the specific healthcare needs a person may have.

### 4 Modernize Forms and Environments Stuck in the Past.

Allow space for patients to indicate their assigned sex at birth, current sex marker and gender identity on forms. Including a question about a patient's pronouns and chosen name, in addition to name on legal documents, is also important. Sex marker on insurance or legal documents may not match sex assigned at birth. Create physical and virtual environments that reflect that you are an LGBTQIA+ inclusive health provider/facility (e.g. social media, communications, waiting room, educational resources, etc.).

### 3 Use Neutral Language.

Avoid using gender-specific language, such as 'ma'am', 'sir', 'Mr.' and 'Mrs.'. It can be helpful to ask about a patient's 'spouse' or 'partner' instead of 'husband' or 'wife.' Patients may use different terms for their anatomy and refer to themselves or their partners using terms that aren't common. Mirroring patient language can make them feel heard. Ask if those are the words they prefer you to use and then document it for future visits.

### 5 Acknowledge Your Mistakes.

If you make a mistake and use the wrong name/pronouns for a patient or make an incorrect assumption, correct yourself and be open to being corrected. If you hear or see someone else make a mistake, correct them and provide guidance on how to prevent future mistakes. This helps promote a collaborative environment with open communication, which is important when aiming for sustainable changes for the overall benefit of competent LGBTQIA+ care. Take the time to expand your knowledge and build your competency in caring for LGBTQIA+ patients.

