



Definitions

Sex: the anatomic distinction between male and female

Gender: the societal construct that is associated with men (masculinity) and women (femininity)

Sexual behavior: sexual activity

Sexual orientation: sexual and emotional attraction to another person

Sexual identity: expression and self-perception of one's sexual orientation

Tips for Visits and the History and Physical

- Encourage the use of office intake forms that include “transgender” under gender and “partner” instead of “husband/wife”
- Promote the posting of non-discrimination signs, including those regarding sexual orientation/gender identity, on the walls
- Sex, sexual behavior, sexual orientation and sexual identity are NOT synonymous → do not assume one from another
- Use gender neutral language, such as “partner,” when inquiring about relationship/sexual history
- Ask if you may document patient's sexual orientation/behavior and discuss issues of confidentiality

Resources

www.amsa.org/gender - AMSA's Gender & Sexuality Committee

www.lgbthealth.net - National Coalition for LGBT Health

www.pflag.org - Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

www.glma.org - Gay and Lesbian Medical Association

www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth - Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

www.nctequality.org - National Center for Transgender Equality

Lesbian Health Disparities

1. **Cancer** – Increased risk for breast cancer
 - Risk factors include obesity, nulliparity, alcohol consumption, and decreased breast cancer screening^{1, 2}
 - Increased risk of gynecologic cancers, compounded by the fact they receive less frequent gynecologic care than heterosexual women can increase morbidity/mortality³
2. **Obesity** – Lesbians more likely to be overweight or obese than heterosexual women^{4, 5, 6, 7}
3. **STIs** – Little research done, but women who have sex with women (WSW) can still transmit all STIs
 - Increased rates of bacterial vaginosis⁸
 - For WSW who have sex with men as well, have higher risk for acquiring HIV than heterosexual women⁹
4. **Substance Abuse** – More likely to drink and experience alcohol-related problems¹⁰
 - Higher rates of cocaine and marijuana use¹¹
 - Found to smoke more than heterosexual women¹²
5. **Cardiovascular disease** – May have increased risk due to higher rates of obesity and tobacco use than heterosexual counterparts^{13, 14, 15}
 - Risk compounded by the fact that lesbians seek health care less often than heterosexual women and consequently, less likely to receive blood pressure and cholesterol screening
6. **Mental disorders** – Depression rates comparable to heterosexual women¹⁶, but relationship satisfaction and support system are significant predictors^{17, 18}

To view references, please visit www.amsa.org/lgbt/wcc.cfm



American Medical Student Association
Gender & Sexuality Committee, 2008