

Who gets breast cancer?

Everyone is at risk for breast cancer. The most common risk factors for breast cancer are:

- Being born female
- Getting older

Lesbian, gay and bisexual women — is there an increased risk?

Although lesbian, gay and bisexual women have a greater risk of breast cancer than other women, it's not because of their sexual orientation. Rather, studies show the increased risk is due to risk factors that tend to be more common in these women. These factors include never having children or having them later in life, obesity and alcohol use.



Seeing a doctor on a regular basis for an exam and having a mammogram are important and can find breast cancer early, when survival is highest.

Screening mammography rates

Screening mammography rates among gay and lesbian women are similar to rates among straight women.

In 2021 (most recent data available):

- 78% of gay and lesbian women ages 50-74 had a mammogram in the past 2 years
- 76% of straight women ages 50-74 had a mammogram in the past 2 years

Data on screening mammography in transgender and nonbinary people are limited. However, there are [screening recommendations for transgender people](#).

Some lesbians and bisexual women may not get regular mammograms. This may be due to:

- Lack of health insurance
- Perceived low risk of breast cancer
- Past experience of discrimination or insensitivity from doctors
- Low level of trust of doctors
- Trouble finding a doctor

Some people may not see a doctor or delay an appointment because they feel they may be treated poorly due to their lifestyle. One in 6 LGBTQ+ adults, and specifically, 1 in 5 transgender adults, avoid health care due to previous discrimination. Find a doctor who is sensitive to your needs. Getting a referral from a trusted family member or friend may help. The National [LGBT Cancer Network](#) has a [directory of LGBT-welcoming cancer screening centers](#) that may also be helpful.

Once you find a doctor you like, see them on a regular basis. These visits offer the chance to get needed routine health screenings and other medical care. It's also a good time to discuss your risk of breast cancer. Regular screening tests (along with follow-up tests and treatment, if diagnosed) reduce your chance of dying from breast cancer.

Resources

Susan G. Komen®

1-877 GO KOMEN
(1-877-465-6636)
komen.org

National LGBT Cancer Network

212-675-2633
cancer-network.org
[cancer-network.org/
providerdatabases/](http://cancer-network.org/providerdatabases/)

The National LGBT Cancer Project

212-673-4920
lgbtcancer.org

Related online resources:

- [Breast Cancer Risk Factors](#)
- [Breast Cancer Screening for Transgender People](#)
- [Healthy Living & Breast Cancer Risk](#)
- [Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Women and Transgender People in the U.S.](#)
- [Talking With Your Doctor](#)
- [What is Breast Cancer?](#)



Transgender or questioning/queer people

Data on breast cancer among transgender men (female sex assigned at birth, male gender identity) and transgender women (male sex assigned at birth, female gender identity) are limited.

A few small studies have compared breast cancer rates among transgender people who had hormone treatments as part of their transition, with or without surgery, to breast cancer rates in the general population. These early findings showed that transgender people:

- Had a much lower risk of breast cancer than women in the general population.
- Had a higher risk than men in the general population.

There's still much to learn about the risk of breast cancer in transgender people.

Data on the risk of breast cancer among questioning/queer people are limited.

If you are questioning/queer or transgender, talk with a doctor about your breast cancer risk. Together you and your doctor can decide which screening tests may be right for you.

So, what can you do? Take charge of your health!

- Choose a doctor who makes you feel at ease.
- Learn about your family health history and talk with a doctor about your risk. Check out the [Family Health History tool](#).
- Talk with a doctor about which screening tests are right for you.
- Know how your breasts normally look and feel and report any changes to a doctor.
- Make healthy lifestyle choices — maintain a healthy weight, make exercise part of your routine, limit alcohol intake and menopausal hormone use (postmenopausal hormones) and breastfeed if you can.
- Contact an organization about LGBTQ health concerns. See resources on the left side of this fact sheet.

This content provided by Susan G. Komen® is designed for educational purposes only and is not exhaustive. Please consult with your personal physician.