Lesbians and bi women should receive the same cancer screening tests that are recommended for all women. It's important that you talk to your doctor and complete all recommended screenings.

Your sexual orientation affects your risks for cancer in lots of ways. It's critical that your doctor knows your sexual orientation, your sexual practices, and more about your life and potential risks. If you don’t feel that your doctor is receptive or knowledgeable about this, you can search for a new one as well as find cancer screening services, and get help if you face discrimination at healthcarebillofrights.org/gethelp.

LESBIANS AND BI WOMEN MAY HAVE HIGHER RISKS OF BREAST CANCER, BECAUSE THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO GIVE BIRTH THAN HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN. THEY ALSO HAVE HIGHER RATES OF SOME OTHER BREAST CANCER RISK FACTORS, INCLUDING ALCOHOL USE AND OBESITY.

Lesbian and bi women are also less likely to perform self-examinations and get routine mammography screenings.

Since lesbians and bi women smoke at higher rates than other women, they may have increased risks of lung cancer.

Lesbian and bi women are at risk for all the other cancers that women face in general, such as uterine, ovarian, colorectal cancer and cervical cancer, among others.

You can reduce your risk for cancer by doing the following:

» Stay smoke free, as cigarettes increase risks for many types of cancer.
» Keep a healthy diet and exercise, as being overweight can increase risk.
» Use preventive care, such as getting check-ups and cancer screenings.
» Get vaccinated. HPV and hepatitis B infection can increase cancer risk, but getting vaccinated can prevent infection. Find additional information at cdc.gov/cancer/dcpc/prevention/vaccination.htm.
» Practice safer sex, as HPV is sexually transmitted and can cause cancer.
» Reduce sun exposure and avoid tanning bed use to prevent skin cancer.
WHY IS CANCER A PARTICULAR CONCERN FOR LGBT PEOPLE?

LGBT people, including trans individuals, have several RISK FACTORS that may put them at higher risk.

SMOKING is the most preventable cause of cancer and death. LGBT people smoke at a rate that is 50% higher than other adults. Smoking kills 30,000+ LGBT people every year.

ALCOHOL USE, POOR EATING HABITS, AND LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY increase your cancer risk, and LGBT people on average engage in higher-risk behavior than other individuals.

LOW USE OF PREVENTIVE CARE occurs because some LGBT people avoid care until they are sick. Getting regular check-ups and screenings is key to preventing cancer.

CANCER AND LESBIAN, BISEXUAL & QUEER WOMEN

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Additional fact sheets and references for this document can be found at LgbtHealthlink.org/fact-sheets