



GAY AND LESBIAN EQUALITY NETWORK
working for equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Ireland

Lesbian Gay & Bisexual Patients: The Issues for General Practice

QUALITY IN PRACTICE COMMITTEE

A Quick Reference Guide for Primary Care Staff

KEY POINTS: Improving Service Provision to Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Patients

1. Stay informed on LGB health issues
2. Don't assume all patients are heterosexual
3. Respond positively when patients disclose they are lesbian, gay or bisexual
4. Be aware of and challenge anti-gay bias
5. Demonstrate that your practice is inclusive of LGB people

EXAMPLES OF INCLUSIVE QUESTIONS	
<i>Instead of:</i>	<i>Use:</i>
Are you married?	Do you have a partner?
Do you have a girlfriend/ boyfriend?	Are you in a relationship?
What is your husband/wife's name?	What is your partner's name?

If you think a patient may be lesbian, gay or bisexual and would like to encourage them to disclose:

- Reassure the patient that all personal information disclosed is confidential and that you provide a non-judgemental service
- Explain the importance for you as their doctor in understanding issues that are relevant to their general and mental health so that you can identify the appropriate treatment or supports that they may need
- Enquire about relationships – current and past
- Try asking indirectly. For example, "In my practice I see a lot of straight and gay people struggling with issues like relationships. Might this be relevant to you?"
- Try asking directly. For example, "Is your partner a man or a woman?" "Are you attracted to men, women or both?" "Have your past relationships been with men, women or both?"

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In addition to routine assessment, where appropriate, screen LGB patients for:

Mental Health	Health-Related Behaviours	Sexual Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-Harm• Suicidal Behaviour• Depression• Anxiety• Substance Misuse• Lack of Social Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smoking• Alcohol Consumption• Recreational Drug Use• Obesity (women)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• STIs• HIV
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Patients can benefit from referral to LGB organisations or helplines for support, advice and information (See Appendix 1 in main document)➤ Where appropriate, consider referral to mental health services and other support services, such as counselling and psychotherapy➤ Also consider referral to a specialist sexual health service for STI screening		