



QUEERING

SEX

ED.

HEALTHCARE & YOU

Queering Sex Ed. is a program of Planned Parenthood Toronto,
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WHY IS ACCESSING HEALTHCARE IMPORTANT?

Accessing healthcare regularly in its various forms is so incredibly important because we can never know when health problems will occur and when we will need to access healthcare. Questions and concerns about our health and our bodies come up often as youth. Having access to a healthcare team that you trust can make it easier to seek out care, and to ask questions when you need to. This makes it more likely that issues will be caught quickly and further health issues can be prevented.



Having the right information about our health and our bodies is important because it helps us to make informed choices about how we treat our bodies and what health means to us. As LGBTQ* youth we might avoid healthcare because we are not treated fairly or well, and this is totally understandable. We also know, however, that avoiding healthcare may have negative long term consequences.

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Unfortunately there can be a lot of barriers to good healthcare for LGBTQ* youth in particular. Meeting with a doctor or healthcare provider as a LGBTQ* youth can be scary. Not knowing what to expect from a healthcare appointment or how we will be treated by the healthcare team can cause anxiety and stress. Sometimes this stress and anxiety will prevent us from scheduling routine checkups or from accessing services when we feel unwell, which can have negative long term consequences. Feelings of stress and anxiety are reinforced when health services stigmatize LGBTQ* youth, and do not address our specific needs. It's true: some healthcare providers do not know how to provide competent care to LGBTQ* youth. They may not ask appropriate or relevant questions, and may not be able to provide accurate information or testing.

The good news is that there are a lot of great LGBTQ* positive healthcare providers out there! But finding one that you connect with and feel comfortable with may take a few tries, especially if you live outside of major cities like Toronto. It's important to find the right healthcare provider to make sure that you're comfortable and able to get the care you need. Maybe you have a good relationship with your healthcare provider, but wish they knew a bit more about the issues you're facing. See the end of this document for ideas and links to resources that you might consider giving them. Finding the right doctor can be a bit like finding the right relationship...maybe all of your friends have told you how awesome a doctor is, maybe that doctor is awesome, but that doesn't mean that doctor is going to be right for you. If you're seeing a doctor who you're not happy with, it may be time to 'break up' and look for somebody new.

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Finding a new doctor can be tricky, particularly if you don't live in an urban centre, or don't have health insurance (e.g. OHIP card). It can be hard finding a doctor at all, because many clinics aren't taking new patients.

It's even more difficult when you have to figure out whether a doctor has relevant information and is comfortable working with LGBTQ* youth. If you're looking for a doctor, you can try some of the following strategies:

If you have LGBTQ*, friends ask them where they access healthcare services and what their experiences have been using these services. If you have access to social media sites, they can be useful in finding a healthcare team (e.g. "Hey Facebook! Does anybody know of any great Trans*-friendly doctors in our town?")! Even if a doctor or clinic isn't accepting new patients in general, some will still accept new patients who are referred by existing clients. Remember, certain clinics will only accept patients living in a certain area of the city, so check this first!

If you're in Ontario and have an OHIP card, you can use Healthcare Connect. If you don't already have a family doctor, this service will match you with one. Unfortunately, Healthcare Connect does not specifically match LGBTQ* people to supportive practitioners.

Find out more information at the following link:

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ms/healthcareconnect/public/

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FINDING A DOCTOR, CONTINUED:

If you're in Ontario, you can look for a doctor's professional history through the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. Every licensed doctor's full professional history (including any formal complaints) is listed on the college's website at: www.cpso.on.ca

Rainbow Health Ontario has a directory of LGBTQ* positive healthcare providers:

www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/lgbtHealth/find.cfm

If you're in Toronto, some LGBTQ* positive healthcare providers include: Planned Parenthood Toronto; The Sherbourne Health Centre; Parkdale Community Health Centre; Women's Health in Women's Hands; Hassle Free Clinic; and Access Alliance Multicultural Health & Community Services.

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DURING YOUR APPOINTMENT

It can be challenging to advocate for yourself in a healthcare setting, particularly if you're already feeling sick or afraid. Things that can help:

- If you're going to be undergoing any treatment or examination at an appointment, especially if you're going to have to change out of your clothes, try to talk to the healthcare provider beforehand while you're still dressed. Review with them what you want to discuss and what will be happening in the appointment. It can be really hard to feel confident advocating for yourself when you're wearing a paper robe!
- Repeat what the healthcare practitioner says, to make sure that you've understood correctly. Take notes about anything you think you might forget.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. If your healthcare provider uses language that you don't understand, or asks questions that you do not feel are relevant, it's okay to ask for clarification.
- Check your assumptions. Some people are more comfortable working with a healthcare provider of a particular gender, age or sexual orientation. That's okay! At the same time, don't assume that your provider will be homophobic just because they're straight.
- Talk about your feelings and concerns. If something comes up that you're unsure about or not comfortable with, try to express this to the healthcare provider so that they can address your worries and make sure that you're both on the same page.

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DURING YOUR APPOINTMENT CONTINUED

Pay attention to how your healthcare provider treats you. Are they surprised if you come out? Do they ask irrelevant questions? Do they make assumptions about what you need, based on your sexual orientation or gender identity? Do they seem uncomfortable talking to you or touching you? How the healthcare practitioner responds to you, and how you feel, is more important than how comfortable they say they are working with LGBTTIQQ2S people. A healthcare provider should **never**:

- Refuse to treat you based on your sexual orientation or gender identity
- Make jokes or comments that are homophobic, transphobic, racist, ableist, sexist, ageist, etc.
- Ask intrusive questions that are unrelated to the health issue you are seeking treatment for
- Assume that you do not require certain tests because of your sex, sexual orientation or gender identity
- Make you feel uncomfortable with their words or body language or assumptions
- Use medical terminology that you do not understand and do not explain it to you
- Speak to the person who is with you, but ignore you
- Ignore your questions
- Disclose your personal or health information to anyone who is not a member of your healthcare team
- Hospitalize you against your wishes (except in special circumstances)

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AFTER YOUR APPOINTMENT

Hopefully your appointment with your healthcare team goes well! If you feel that it hasn't gone well, for any reason, you have the right to make a formal complaint. Making a formal complaint can be a stressful and time consuming process, but it can also facilitate change and make you feel empowered. If you are going

- Write down what happened at the appointment as soon afterwards as possible, so that you remember the details. If you had another person at the appointment with you (friend, family member, etc.) ask them to write down what they remember.

- If your appointment was at a clinic or hospital, contact their "Patient Relations" or "Patient Advocacy" department. Every clinic and hospital has a department that plays this role. You will be able to find their contact information online, or by calling the clinic or hospital and asking for the Patient Relations or Patient Advocacy Office.

- If you're in Ontario, you can file a complaint against a specific doctor by contacting the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario at:

[www.cpso.on.ca/uploadedFiles/downloads/cpsodocuments/policies/Complaint_Form\(3\).pdf](http://www.cpso.on.ca/uploadedFiles/downloads/cpsodocuments/policies/Complaint_Form(3).pdf)

- If you're in Ontario and are filing a complaint against a nurse, contact the College of Nurses of Ontario at:

www.cno.org/protect-public/making-a-complaint-public

- Most types of healthcare practitioners are registered with a college or association that monitors the practitioners' accreditations and work. If you're outside of Ontario or are filing a complaint against another healthcare practitioner (massage therapist, ultrasound technician, etc.), look online to find the association or college the practitioner belongs to and contact them for information on how to file a complaint.

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REMEMBER...

Accessing healthcare can be hard, and can take practice. Remember to think about what support you require. You have the right to ask for what you need. Information is out there. If you are worried you aren't getting the right information you can reach out to other resources, such as the internet, public health websites, friends, family or other doctors. You deserve good medical care just like everyone else.

RESOURCES FOR SELF-ADVOCACY

www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/searchResults.cfm?mode=3&resourceID=7d943c40-3048-8bc6-e853-093d12289f10

Institute of Medicine (2011). The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People. Retrieved from www.iom.edu/Reports/2011/The-Health-of-Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender-People.

Taking Charge. A Handbook for Health Care and Social Service Providers Working with Trans* People. (2011). Retrieved from www.santetranshealth.org

Copies available in English and French. Pdf. available at <http://library.catie.ca/pdf/ATI-20000s/26382.pdf>