LGBTQIA+ people and cancer: English

This information is for LGBTQIA+ people who have cancer.

LGBTQIA+ means lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual people. It also includes other romantic or sexual attractions and gender identities.

If you are LGBTQIA+, you may have questions about cancer and your cancer treatment. You may want specific support that is for LGBTQIA+ people who have cancer.

If you have any questions about this information, ask your cancer team at the hospital where you are having treatment.

You can also call Macmillan Cancer Support on freephone **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. We have interpreters, so you can speak to us in your own language. When you call us, please tell us in English which language you need.

There is more cancer information in this language and other languages on our website. Visit **macmillan.org.uk/translations**

This information is about:

- **Talking to your healthcare team**
- **Getting fair treatment**
- **Cancer, sex and fertility**
- **Cancer if you are transgender, non-binary or intersex**
- **LGBTQIA+, cancer and your community**
- **Getting the right care and support for you**
- **How Macmillan can help you**
- **More information in your language**
- **References and thanks**

Talking to your healthcare team

Your healthcare team are the people who give you treatment or advice about your health. This could be your GP, cancer doctor and nurses.

Sometimes a person in your healthcare team may ask you about:

- your gender – this means if you are a man, a woman, or any other gender identity
- your sex or reproductive body parts
- your sex life or sexual orientation
- your relationships and who is important to you.

This information can help your healthcare team support you. It helps them:

- give you the right health information
- treat you in a way that is personal for you
- support the people who are important to you.

If you are not sure why your healthcare team need this information, you can ask them. They can tell you why this may be important to support or treat you.

Can I tell my healthcare team I am LGBTQIA+?

If you want your healthcare team to know, you can tell them you are LGBTQIA+, even if they have not asked.

You may choose to do this when you first meet someone from your team. Or you may decide to wait until you find someone you feel comfortable with.

Some healthcare professionals wear an NHS Pride Rainbow Badge. This means the person wearing it supports LGBTQIA+ people. Some people in your healthcare team may wear other rainbow items instead. They may be LGBTQIA+ or they may want to show they support LGBTQIA+ people.

What else can I tell my healthcare team?

You can tell your healthcare team anything that is important to you. This could include:

- if you have family, friends or a partner who support you
- who you give consent for them to talk to about your care
- what information you do and do not need.

You may want to explain whether you are out or not. This means whether other people know you are LGBTQIA+ or if you keep this secret. Your cancer team should treat all information about you confidentially. They should only share information with other healthcare professionals when it is needed for your care.

Getting fair treatment

Your cancer team should treat you fairly, whoever you are. It is against the law to treat you unfairly because of your ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, sex or if you are transgender. Or because of religion or if you have a disability.

If you feel like you are being treated unfairly, there are things you can do:

- Talk to someone from your cancer team, if you feel safe to do this. This may help your team make things right. It also helps them learn and give better care.
- Talk to someone you trust. This may be someone close to you or a healthcare professional you know well. There are also organisations that LGBTQIA+ people can talk to for support.
- Give feedback or make a complaint to the NHS. You can give feedback and make a complaint without giving your name if you want to.

Cancer, sex and fertility

Cancer and some cancer treatments can affect:

- your sex life – some side effects may be more of a problem depending on the type of sex you prefer
- your fertility – this means your ability to get pregnant or make someone pregnant.

Your cancer doctor or nurse can tell you if your cancer treatment may cause sexual side effects or fertility problems. You can ask them any questions about sex or fertility before, during or after cancer treatment.

Cancer care if you are transgender, non-binary or intersex

Your cancer team should offer you care, support and information that meets your needs. They should treat you as an individual and work with you in a way that respects your privacy and dignity.

Your team should always treat information about you confidentially. They may share information with other healthcare professionals, but only when it is needed for your care.

If you need to stay in hospital, your team should ask where you prefer to stay. Where you stay should give you privacy and keep you safe. Tell your team what feels comfortable and right for you.

If you are trans or non-binary

It can be helpful for your cancer team to know the gender you were assigned at birth. Sometimes this can be important. For example, some scans should not be used during pregnancy and can be harmful. If the gender on your NHS record is male and there is a chance you might be pregnant, it is important that the person doing the scan is aware of this to keep you safe.

There are some gender-affirming treatments that may affect cancer treatment. It is important to tell your cancer team if you have had or plan to have any of the following:

- hormone drugs that make your body more male or female
- surgery to make a penis or vagina (genital surgery)
- surgery to remove the breasts. This is called top surgery or male chest reconstruction.

If your cancer team need advice about how your cancer care may affect your gender-affirming care, the **UK Cancer and Transition Service (UCATS)** can help. UCATS is a free service provided by NHS professionals for people anywhere in the UK. Your cancer team should ask your permission before they contact UCATS. You can also contact UCATS yourself.

If you are intersex

Being intersex can make healthcare difficult. You may have had treatments in the past that you did not want. This may affect how you feel about hospitals and doctors now.

It is important that your cancer team understands this. They should work with you to plan your care. They also need to understand your body. If you have had surgery or hormone treatment for an intersex condition in the past, this may affect the cancer care you need now.

You can help your team by telling them:

- what words you use to describe your body
- if there are words or questions you find upsetting
- anything that makes healthcare difficult for you
- how they can make things easier for you.

LGBTQIA+, cancer and your community

Family and community can be an important source of support. But for some LGBTQIA+ people, this may be complicated. How your family or community feels about LGBTQIA+ people or about cancer, can affect how easy it is to ask for help.

People around you may not realise how they are affecting you. For example, some families or communities do not talk about cancer. There is an unspoken idea that cancer is private or should not be talked about. This can make it difficult to talk about what is happening to you or ask for help when you need it.

If you are struggling to get support or you are being treated negatively, try to talk to someone you trust. This could be a friend, partner, someone you work with or an LGBTQIA+ support group. You could speak to a counsellor if this would help. Ask your GP, cancer doctor or nurse if they can arrange this. Or call our free support line on **0808 808 00 00** for information and support.

Getting the right care and support for you

If you have cancer and do not speak English, you may be worried that this will affect your cancer treatment and care. But your healthcare team should offer you care, support and information that meets your needs.

We know that sometimes people may have extra challenges in getting the right support. For example, if you work or have a family you might also have worries about money and transport costs. All of this can be stressful and hard to cope with.

How Macmillan can help you

At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything, and we are here to support you.

Macmillan Support Line

We have interpreters, so you can speak to us in your language. Just tell us, in English, the language you want to use.

Our expert advisers on the Macmillan Support Line can help with medical questions or be there to listen if you need someone to talk to. We can also talk to you about your money worries and recommend other useful organisations that can help. The free, confidential phone line is open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Macmillan website
Our website has lots of information in English about cancer. There is also more information in other languages at **macmillan.org.uk/translations**

We may also be able to arrange translations just for you. Email **informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk** to tell us what you need.

Information centres
Our information and support centres are based in hospitals, libraries and mobile centres. Visit one to get the information you need and speak with someone face to face. Find your nearest centre at **macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres** or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Local support groups
At a support group, you can talk to other people affected by cancer. Find out about support groups in your area at **macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups** or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Macmillan Online Community
You can also talk to other people affected by cancer online at **macmillan.org.uk/community**

You can access it at any time of day or night. You can share your experiences, ask questions, or just read people's posts.

More information in your language

We have information in your language about these topics:

Signs and symptoms of cancer

- Signs and symptoms cards

If you are diagnosed with cancer

- Cancer care in the UK
- Healthcare for refugees and people seeking asylum
- If you are diagnosed with cancer

Types of cancer

- Bowel cancer
- Breast cancer
- Cervical cancer
- Lung cancer
- Prostate cancer

Treatment for cancer

- Chemotherapy
- Radiotherapy
- Sepsis and cancer
- Side effects of cancer treatment
- Surgery

Living with cancer

- Claiming benefits when you have cancer
- Eating problems and cancer
- Healthy eating
- Help with costs when you have cancer
- LGBTQIA+ people and cancer
- Tiredness (fatigue) and cancer

End of life

- End of life

To see this information, go to **macmillan.org.uk/translations**
For more support to understand information, go to
macmillan.org.uk/understandinginformation

References and thanks

This information has been written and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team. It has been translated professionally.

The information included is based on our LGBTQIA+ people and cancer content available in English on our website.

This information has been reviewed by relevant experts and approved by members of Macmillan's Centre of Clinical Expertise.

Thanks also to the people affected by cancer who reviewed this information.

All our information is based on the best evidence available. For more information about the sources we use, please contact us at informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk

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