

LGBTQ+ people and cancer

This information is for LGBTQ+ people who have cancer.

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

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

If you have any questions about this information, ask your doctor or nurse 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.

We also have more cancer information in your language at [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

This information is about:

- Talking to the healthcare team
- Fair treatment
- Cancer, sex and fertility
- Cancer treatment for transgender and non-binary people
- Getting the right care and support for you
- How Macmillan can help you
- More information in your language
- References and thanks

Talking to the healthcare team

Does my healthcare team need to know I am LGBTQ+?

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 sexual or romantic relationships
- your sex life.

You do not have to talk to them about this, but it can help your healthcare team support you. It helps them:

- give you the right 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 LGBTQ+?

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

You may choose to do this when you first meet someone from your team. Or you may wait until you know the person better.

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

What else should 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 LGBTQ+ or whether you keep this secret. Your team should treat all information about you confidentially. They should not tell anyone that you are LGBTQ+ without your permission.

Getting fair treatment

Your cancer team must treat you equally if you are LGBTQ+. Treating someone unfairly because they are LGBTQ+ is against the law. If this happens tell someone you trust.

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

- Talk to someone from your healthcare 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 LGBTQ+ people can talk to.
- Give feedback or make a complaint to the NHS. You can give feedback and complaints 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 treatment for transgender or non-binary people

Does my cancer team need to know my gender at birth?

You do not have to tell your team the gender you were assigned at birth or if you are transgender. But it can be helpful and sometimes it is important that your team knows the gender you were assigned at birth.

For example, some scans should not be used during pregnancy and can be harmful. If you now identify as male but you can get pregnant, it is important that the person doing the scan knows this.

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

You can tell your cancer team what name and pronouns you use. Pronouns are:

- she and her
- he and him

- they and them.

Gender-affirming treatments and cancer

These gender-affirming treatments may affect the cancer treatment and information you need:

- 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.

It is important to tell your cancer team if you are taking hormone drugs. They also need to know if you have had surgery, or if you plan to have this in the future.

If your cancer team need advice about how your cancer care may affect your gender-affirming care, they can get advice from a gender identity doctor. They should ask your permission to do this.

Where will I stay in hospital?

If you need to stay in hospital, your team should ask where you want to stay. Some wards in hospital are only for men or only for women. Where you stay should give you privacy and keep you safe. Tell your team what feels comfortable and right for you.

LGBTQ+, cancer and your community

Family and community can be an important source of support. But sometimes people are treated negatively by their community because they are LGBTQ+ or because they have cancer. If this happens try to talk to someone you trust. This could be a friend, family member or someone you work with. 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 face extra challenges in getting the right support. For example, if you work or have a family it can be hard to find time to go to hospital appointments. You might also have worries about money and transport costs. All of this can be stressful and hard to cope with.

But help is available. Our free support line **0808 808 00 00** can offer advice, in your language, about your situation. You can speak to nurses, financial guides, welfare rights advisers and work support advisers.

We also offer Macmillan Grants to people with cancer. These are one-off payments that can be used for things like hospital parking, travel costs, childcare or heating bills.

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. We can help with medical questions, give you information about financial support, or be there to listen if you need someone to talk to. The free, confidential phone line is open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Web chat

You can send us a web chat message saying you would like an interpreter. Tell us, in English, the language you need, and we will arrange for someone to contact you. Click on the 'Chat to us' button, which appears on pages across the website. Or go to [macmillan.org.uk/talktous](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/talktous)

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](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

We can also arrange translations just for you. Email us at cancerinformationteam@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](https://www.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](https://www.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](https://www.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 through people's posts.

More information in your language

We have information in your language about these topics:

<p>Types of cancer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breast cancer• Cervical cancer• Large bowel cancer• Lung cancer• Prostate cancer <p>Treatments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chemotherapy• Radiotherapy• Surgery	<p>Coping with cancer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you are diagnosed with cancer – a quick guide• Eating problems and cancer• End of life• Financial support – benefits• Financial support – help with costs• Healthy eating• Tiredness (fatigue) and cancer• Side effects of cancer treatment• What you can do to help yourself
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To see this information, go to [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

References and thanks

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

The information included is based on Macmillan's information about LGBTQ+ people and cancer treatment at www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/impacts-of-cancer/lgbtq-cancer

This information was developed with Live Through This – a cancer support and advocacy charity for the LGBTIQ+ community <http://www.livethroughthis.co.uk>

It has been reviewed by relevant experts and approved by Dr Tim Iveson, Consultant Medical Oncologist and Macmillan Chief Medical Editor.

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

MAC18794_English

Content reviewed: 2022

Next planned review: 2025

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Patient Information Forum