

Mayo Clinic minute: The importance of cancer screenings for the LGBTQ community

June 7 2022, by Deb Balzer



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The LGBTQ community includes people of all races and ethnicities, religions, and social classes. People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or gender-nonconforming may face specific health concerns related to their gender incongruence, sexual orientation and practices. Many experience stigma around their identity and may fear discrimination when seeking health care.

Dr. Natalie Erbs, a family medicine physician at Mayo Clinic, says one

concern is the lack of potentially lifesaving cancer screenings.

Going to the doctor can be scary for anyone, but it's especially scary for some.

"One of the things we see is that so many members of our LGBTQ community are just scared to come to the doctor in general. They're worried about being judged for life choices or sexual preferences, and they're not comfortable talking about that."

And that means missing important [health care](#) screenings.

"They're missing their breast cancer screenings. They're missing their colon cancer screenings. They're missing their cervical cancer screenings."

Dr. Erbs says she is concerned that some [patients](#) who are transgender may forgo cancer screenings.

"For our [transgender patients](#), that can be a much more sensitive topic because the organs that you have, you may no longer identify with. And if you don't identify with those organs, you might not want to come in and have them examined."

Dr. Erbs says that however you identify, it's crucial to take care of your health.

"We want you to be your authentic self," says Dr. Erbs. "And so that you can come in, and we can treat you."

The bottom line, says Dr. Erbs, is: "Come in for your preventive screenings. It very well could save your life."

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Citation: Mayo Clinic minute: The importance of cancer screenings for the LGBTQ community (2022, June 7) retrieved 10 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-06-mayo-clinic-minute-importance-cancer.html>

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