

Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Other Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Sexual and Reproductive Health in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Youth



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KEYWORDS

- STI • Sexual health • HIV • LGBT • Sexual minority • Gender minority
- Gender nonconforming • Adolescent

KEY POINTS

- Although lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) youth face many sexual health inequities, including increased risk of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and pregnancy, providers have the opportunity to help young people to grow up to become sexually healthy adults.
- Pediatricians can support the development of healthy sexual identities and behavior by discussing sexual orientation and behavior in a nonjudgmental, respectful, and confidential manner.
- It is imperative to screen for HIV and recognize symptoms of acute HIV infection among all adolescents, but special attention should be paid to young men who have sex with men and young transgender women who are disproportionately affected; early diagnosis, linkage to, and retention in care with effective treatment improves both patient-specific and public health outcomes.

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- LGBT youth, like their heterosexual counterparts, are at risk for syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomonas, and human papilloma virus (HPV), and providers should be familiar with the recommendations for screening of these STIs.
- Providers should offer sexual health preventive services, including safer sex counseling, HIV pre-exposure and postexposure prophylaxis, and vaccination for hepatitis A, B, and HPV, as well as discussion of sexual transmission of hepatitis C by HIV-infected men who have sex with men.

INTRODUCTION

Given estimates that more than 5% of the population identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), or questioning, pediatricians are likely to care for LGBT youth at some point during practice. As health care providers, pediatricians are uniquely positioned to serve as expert guides to adolescents and young adults (AYA) navigating their sexuality and sexual health. By providing support and accurate information, pediatricians can positively influence those youth struggling with their sexuality, particularly those who are LGBT. It is important to understand that although this population may face unique challenges, pediatric providers can help ensure that they grow up to have healthy sexual and reproductive lives.

SEXUAL HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INEQUITIES AMONG LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH***Epidemiology***

Data demonstrate that LGBT youth are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to experience a wide array of health inequities, many of which predispose them to an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).¹ They are often subject to stigmatization, isolation, and societal and parental rejection. It is likely that these health inequities arise from individual, interpersonal, and structural stigma, which promote barriers to care (see Mark L. Hatzenbuehler and John E. Pachankis' article, "[Stigma and Minority Stress as Social Determinants of Health Among LGBT Youth: Research Evidence and Clinical Implications](#)," in this issue).²

LGBT youth also face significantly different sexual health outcomes related to sexual assault, STIs, HIV, and teen pregnancy. They are at significantly higher risk of sexual assault and abuse than their heterosexual peers.³ In addition, according to Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance data, compared with heterosexual youth, LGBT youth are more likely to be sexually active, to have earlier sexual debut (before age 13), and have 4 or more sexual partners.⁴ Compared with heterosexual youth, LGBT youth were about half as likely to have used a condom at last intercourse (35.8% vs 65.5%). These behaviors may partly explain why although the overall incidence rates of gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis have decreased among adolescents in the last 15 years, they have increased among adolescent men who have sex with men (MSM).⁵ Adolescent MSM have also been disproportionately affected by HIV. Although MSM accounted for only 4% of the male population in the United States in 2010,⁶ they represented 78% of new HIV infections among men and 68% of total new infections. Over the past decade, HIV incidence in young MSM of color has increased by 87%.⁷ Young transgender women (YTW) are particularly vulnerable to HIV. A review of studies estimated that HIV prevalence for transgender women was nearly 50 times as high as that of other adults.⁸

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