



10 Health Issues Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) Should Discuss with their Healthcare Provider

These are the most important topics that [Gay and Lesbian Medical Association](#) healthcare providers have identified for men who have sex with men, as adapted by One Colorado. These items may not apply to everyone in this community and are not listed in rank order.

- 1. Coming Out to your Provider:** It's important that your provider knows your sexual behaviors so they can provide you the best care, as MSM have different health risk factors than other men. If your provider doesn't seem comfortable with your identity, there are likely other providers in your network to replace them and can provide the quality of care you deserve.
- 2. Safe(r) Sex:** [MSM are at an increased risk of acquiring many sexually transmitted infections](#). Many of these are easily prevented through safer sex practices. This might include condom use, PrEP, getting regular testing, and practicing open communication with sexual partners. Talk to your provider about what safer sex practices might work well for you and your partner(s).
- 3. Hepatitis: Immunization & Screening:** [MSM are at an increased risk of acquiring hepatitis, notably subtypes B and C](#). This is a viral infection of the liver that may lead to long-term liver failure or cancer. Stay up to date with your immunizations against hepatitis A and B, and talk to your provider about screening for all three types. If you are positive for hepatitis C, your provider can connect you to highly effective, modern treatment.
- 4. Human Papillomavirus (HPV):** HPV is a virus that can cause anal and genital warts, as well as some anal and oral cancers. [MSM have a higher prevalence of HPV infection compared to other men](#). Your provider can administer immunizations for common HPV subtypes that cause these cancers. If you test positive for HPV, there are treatments available.
- 5. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) & HIV:** [Rates of chlamydia & gonorrhoea, syphilis, HIV](#), and pubic lice are higher among MSM. It's important to get screened often for these STIs. The more partners you have, the more often you should be screened, especially as some of these infections may have no symptoms. Pre-exposure prophylaxis is a once daily pill that can dramatically reduce the risk of acquiring HIV. Talk to your provider if this is the right medication for you. If you test positive for any STIs or HIV, your provider can discuss treatment options available to you.
- 6. Mental Health:** [Chronic minority stress, along with potential loss of social supports after coming out or concealing your identity, leads to higher rates of anxiety and depression among MSM](#). Be open with your provider about your mental health goals.
- 7. Substance & Alcohol Use:** Heavy drinking, [binge drinking](#), and [substance use](#) are more common among MSM than heterosexual men. This may be due to minority stress, discrimination, and/or internalized homophobia. Excessive drinking is associated with higher rates of cancers, liver disease, and other health problems. Many risks may come



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with substance use, depending on what is being used. Talk to your provider about what healthier use might look like for you.

8. **Tobacco Use:** [Men who have sex with men, on average, tend to use tobacco at higher rates than heterosexual men.](#) This may be due to similar reasons as stated above. Tobacco use is associated with higher rates of cancers, heart disease, emphysema, and high blood pressure to name a few. Talk to your provider about cessation or healthier ways of using.
9. **Fitness:** Problems with body image are common among MSM, [leading to higher rates of eating disorders like bulimia and anorexia nervosa.](#) While regular exercise and a wholesome diet are key elements of good health, it's important to communicate with your provider about what healthy diet and exercise look like for you. The use of anabolic steroids and certain supplements is also dangerous. Obesity may also be a problem for some MSM.
10. **Prostate, Testicular, & Colon Cancer:** [MSM may be at increased risk of prostate, testicular, and colon cancers.](#) All men should be regularly screened for these cancers throughout their lifespan. Talk to your provider about ways to reduce your risk and stay up to date on your screening exams.