

Get the Facts...

LGBTQ+ VETERAN HEALTH CARE

Nonbinary Veterans

Binary means two of something. Most people in our society view themselves as male or female. This is a gender binary. Nonbinary gender identities include more than two categories (male and female). Some nonbinary people shift between masculine, feminine, and nonbinary genders or use no gender terms to describe themselves. Some people may blend masculine and feminine genders. Others may use different terms to describe their gender over time. Some nonbinary people may describe themselves as transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, agender, or just nonbinary. These concepts are not new. Throughout history, cultures have viewed gender in different ways.

Many nonbinary Veterans receive care at VHA. The following is a list of the top things nonbinary Veterans should discuss with their VHA healthcare provider.

1. Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Pronouns, Sexual Orientation

Everyone, including nonbinary people, has a:

- **Gender identity:** a person's inner sense of their gender
- **Gender expression:** the way a person expresses their gender, usually through behavior and how they look. Gender expression may reflect a person's gender identity but does not always.
- **Sexual orientation:** how a person describes their sexual attractions: for example, lesbian or, gay, bisexual, queer, straight, asexual, pansexual, and other related terms.

Providers may ask about your sexual orientation and gender identity. This is standard health care practice. There are policies in place to ensure that you are being treated and addressed with dignity and respect. See additional resources for information about VA policies related to LGBTQ+ health care.

- **Pronouns:** the terms we use to refer to people, such as "she" or "they." Correct pronoun use is an essential part of affirming healthcare. VA policy requires health care providers and staff to use a Veteran's correct pronouns.

Nonbinary Veterans can use any gender pronouns or combination of pronouns. Veterans may use they/them pronouns, she/her pronouns, he/him pronouns, other pronouns (e.g., xe/xem), two or more pronouns (e.g., she/her and they/them), or their name instead of a pronoun.

Since VA health providers should start pronoun disclosures, you can expect providers to introduce themselves with their pronouns and to ask about your pronouns. If VA providers do not start the discussion about pronouns, nonbinary Veterans may find the following tips helpful.

Scenario:	Example:
Sharing your pronouns	"My pronouns are they/them."
Clarifying pronoun use in your record	"Can you confirm with me what pronouns you will use in my record?"
Correcting provider on pronoun use	<p>"You mean, 'their.'"</p> <p>If this happens many times, "I'm noticing you seem to struggle with my pronouns."</p>
Tips if these strategies are not effective	<p>Reach out for support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator ▪ Patient Experience Officer ▪ Privacy Officer

2. Gender Affirming Treatments

Gender affirming care means supporting and respecting the Veteran's gender identity in every part of VA. The VA strives to provide gender affirming care to transgender and gender diverse Veterans. This includes nonbinary Veterans.

Gender affirming care includes general health care available to all Veterans, as well as care that is a part of a Veteran's gender medical transition process. The VA does not currently provide gender affirming surgeries. However, the VA provides other medically necessary gender affirming care, such as:

- speech therapy
- prosthetics (such as packers, gaffes, binders, etc.)
- infertility treatment
- hormone therapy
- pre/post-operative care

Gender affirming treatment plans should be Veteran-centered and may include care that is not listed here.

NONBINARY HEALTH CARE

3. Hormone Therapy

Nonbinary Veterans may seek gender affirming hormone therapy. Gender affirming medical care should be guided by the Veteran's personal goals. Treatments may include prescription of hormones at a lower dose, with a more gradual increase in dosing, and/or taking hormones for a limited time.

4. Health Disparities

Nonbinary gender identity and gender fluidity are not psychological problems but a part of human diversity. Being nonbinary, gender fluid, or gender nonconforming is not a mental illness or a problem to be corrected.

Transgender and nonbinary people can have stress in their lives because of their identity, which research has linked to higher rates of medical and mental health problems. However, research is limited on nonbinary persons. Compared to binary transgender people, nonbinary people may experience higher rates of depression, psychological distress, eating concerns, and suicidality. This is likely because nonbinary gender identities are often less commonly understood in our communities and health care systems.

As nonbinary people express their gender, they may also experience increases in discrimination compared to binary transgender people. Nonbinary persons are also more likely to say they feel invisible or that people say their identity isn't real or valid.

5. Resilience

Having a nonbinary gender identity also offers opportunities for personal growth and strength, which can lessen the effect of stress related to having a minority identity. VA providers may ask nonbinary Veterans about their coping strengths, such as connections to nonbinary peers, pride about one's gender identity, and support from family and friends. Providers can help nonbinary Veterans find activities and support to better feel accepted and respected. Resilience can look different for each individual and should reflect the person's unique interests and values.

YOUR PRIVACY MATTERS

I DON'T WANT ANYONE BESIDES MY PROVIDER TO KNOW THAT I'M NONBINARY. WILL THIS INFORMATION BE SHARED?

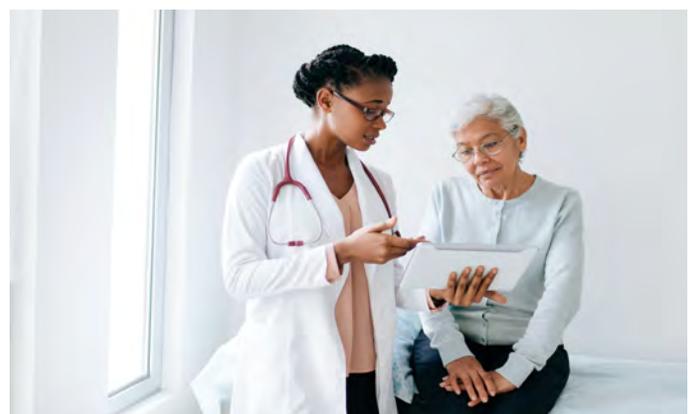
Your VHA provider has been trained to keep your conversations confidential. You can also ask that this information not be entered into your medical record, although there may be important reasons for your other health care providers to know this information. Finding a provider you are comfortable with is essential to your health and wellness.

WHAT IF MY PROVIDER USES THE WRONG TERMS OR PRONOUNS WHEN REFERRING TO ME OR MY SPOUSE/PARTNER?

Your VHA provider may not know what terms you prefer to use. Let providers know how you describe yourself and your partner(s), and they will start to use those words. If they make a mistake, let them know! Your provider wants to make you feel comfortable, and using words that you prefer is an important first step.

Each facility has an LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator, who can help you find a culturally competent provider. In addition, many VA facilities have LGBTQ+ Veteran Web pages. For a list of those Web pages, see here:

www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/VAFacilities.asp



To find the VHA medical center or Vet Center nearest you, call 1-877-222-8387 or visit www.va.gov/directory. Every VHA has an LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator (VCC) to assure you have access to appropriate treatment. They can assist you with finding providers, answering questions, and reporting problems if you encounter them. Visit the [LGBTQ+ VCC LOCATOR](#) to find out who the LGBTQ+ VCC is for your facility.

LGBTQ+ HEALTH PROGRAM

The LGBTQ+ Health Program within the Population Health/Patient Care Services assists LGBTQ+ Veterans in accessing quality health care. Visit our website at <http://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/index.asp>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ARE YOU A MEDICAL PROVIDER LOOKING FOR RESOURCES TO HELP PROVIDE CARE TO LGBTQ+ VETERANS?

Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality
www.gлма.org

The Fenway Institute – The National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center
<https://www.lgbtqihealtheducation.org/>

ARE YOU A VETERAN LOOKING TO UNDERSTAND WHY YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY ARE IMPORTANT TO YOUR OVERALL CARE?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – LGBTQ+ Health
www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth

DO YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION ON THE VA'S LGBTQ+ HEALTH PROGRAM?

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender, and Queer+ Health Program <http://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/index.asp>

ARE YOU A VETERAN LOOKING FOR GENERAL INFORMATION?

Tobacco and Health
www.publichealth.va.gov/smoking/index.asp

Viral Hepatitis
www.hepatitis.va.gov

ARE YOU A VETERAN LOOKING FOR GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAMS MENTIONED ABOVE?

National Center for Transgender Equality
<https://transequality.org/>

- ID Documents Center (specifically)

SOCIAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS, SUCH AS:

Transgender American Veterans Association
<http://transveteran.org/>

SAGE Hotline
<https://www.sageusa.org/>

- 877-360-LGBT (5428)
- 24hr chat/support for LGBTQ+ Elders

Trans Lifeline
<https://translifeline.org/>

- (877) 565-8860
- 24hr support for trans/gender expansive people



 **If you are in crisis, please call 911, go to your nearest Emergency Room, or call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (press "1" after you call).**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration

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