IMPROVING YOUR HEALTHCARE

What can I do to improve my health if I'm Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender (GLBT)?

Besides the things that everybody ought to do (eat well, exercise regularly, avoid cigarettes), GLBT individuals can do these things to improve our own health:

- Protect yourself and your partner in case of catastrophic illness:
  - Designate a health-care power-of-attorney, give a copy to your primary provider, to significant others, and carry one when you travel.
  - Purchase long-term care insurance - Though less urgent for those in legal marriages or civil unions, these practices can still be helpful.
  - If you are married or in a civil union, make sure that is known to your health care providers.

- Women and Trans Men (female-to-male transsexuals) with cervical tissue should have pelvic exams starting three years after your first sex that involved someone's penis, fingers, shared sex toy or tongue inside your vagina, or at age 21 at the latest, and then at least every three years.

- Women and Trans Men with breast tissue over age 40 should have annual mammograms.

- Those with depression, anxiety or substance abuse issues should talk with GLBT culturally-competent mental health or drug/alcohol treatment professionals.

- Those who have had unprotected sex, especially with more than one person or with someone who may have had multiple partners, should get tested for HIV, HPV and hepatitis.

- Those who might have sex in the future, especially if they aren't ready to settle down with one person "forever", should get hepatitis immunizations and learn how to make condoms and/or latex dams a comfortable, expected part of lovemaking.

- Work for equal health care benefits and financial safety for yourself and other GLBT people.

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