

Facts why Lesbians are more at risk from Breast Cancer

Lesbians are:

- More likely to smoke and drink more alcohol than heterosexual women (prior to the recent smoking ban certain lesbians were more likely to have socialised in pubs and clubs where smoking was common increasing the risk of lung cancer and other conditions related to second hand smoke).
- Less likely to use oral contraceptives, bear children or breast feed than heterosexual women – factors which can protect against breast cancer.
- Statistically one of the groups who are at risk of being overweight, which increases the risk of several types of cancer including breast, colon and uterine.
- Significantly more likely than heterosexual women not to have had a timely mammogram - past negative experiences of accessing healthcare may have resulted in them possibly waiting too long before seeking healthcare and as a result missing out on early detection.
- Less likely to be open about their sexuality when accessing healthcare and are therefore less likely to have discussed any increased risks they might have to breast cancer.
- Less likely to reveal their sexual orientation to their GP for possible fear of an adverse reaction leading to possible discrimination – coping mechanisms for dealing with discrimination can sometimes result in higher rates of lesbians leading less healthy lifestyles than heterosexual women.

What are we doing about this?

This initiative has been commissioned by the NHS for identifying gaps in knowledge about lesbians and breast cancer with the hope of increasing the number of lesbians screened resulting in earlier detection of cancer.

Findings shall be used to develop local policy and to inform the delivery of cancer screening and related services.

The partners delivering this initiative are:

- NHS Plymouth,
- Plymouth Pride Forum.



How to get involved:

If you are a lesbian aged 40 or over and interested in sharing with us your awareness and experiences of breast screening services, please complete the details below and post in the box;

Name:

Address:

Email:

Are you aged:

40-49 50-59 60-69

Have you received a breast screening appointment?

Yes No

Have you had a breast screen?

Yes No

or send details to;

Vikki.West@plymouth.nhs.uk

Why Screen?

According to recent research:

- One in nine women will develop breast cancer.
- There is evidence to suggest that lesbians have a slightly higher risk for contracting the disease than their straight counterparts – the reason for this is in part due to known risk factors.
- Most women who get breast cancer have no family history of the disease although some women are at a slightly higher risk; they are women whose mothers or sisters had breast cancer.
- Breast cancer is more common in women aged over 50 and all women aged between 50 and 70 receive a standard letter inviting them to attend a breast screening appointment.

For further information about breast screening contact:

www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk

For user friendly guides about breast awareness specifically for lesbians:

www.lgf.org.uk



Breast Cancer facts for Lesbians