

Fact: All women are at risk of developing breast cancer. A woman's lifetime risk of developing breast cancer is now considered to be **one in eight**. Risk increases with age.

Despite the risk, many lesbians don't seek regular health screenings. Often this is due to homophobia in the health care system.



**LESBIAN
HEALTH
PROJECT**

What is the lesbian health project?

Initiated in 1992, the Lesbian Health Project of the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center seeks to promote non-homophobic health services which will provide lesbians with the ability to make the best health decisions possible based on accurate knowledge. The focus of the project is on developing educational materials for lesbians and trainings for health and social service professionals. The project has recently conducted a survey to identify lesbian friendly health care providers in northern and eastern Maine who will accept referrals from the Lesbian Health Project. In addition, the project sponsors a monthly Lesbian Health Clinic at the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center. For more information or to become involved in the work of the project contact The Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center at 947-5337.

LOCAL RESOURCES

Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center

Monthly Lesbian Health Clinics

Provide low-cost, woman positive, lesbian-centered health care including:

- Pelvic Exams
- Breast Exams
- Health Education
- Instruction in Breast Self-Exam
- Lesbian Health Project
- Pap Smears
- Mammography Referrals
- Health Advocacy
- Screening and Treatment of STDs
- Lesbian Support Group

Call **947-5337** for an appointment.

The Maine Breast and Cervical Health Program

Provides mammograms, Pap tests, clinical breast exams and pelvic exams at no cost to Maine women, over 50, who meet financial guidelines and don't have enough insurance.

The program provides breast and cervical health education, including breast self-exam (BSE), for all Maine women.

Call **1-800-350-5180** to see if you qualify and to find a provider near you.

TTY 287-8015



If you are a lesbian...

You Are At Risk for Breast Cancer, Too.



**LESBIAN
HEALTH
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Produced in association with
the Susan G. Komen Breast
Cancer Foundation and the
Mabel Wadsworth Women's
Health Center

Myth: Because little attention has been paid to lesbians and cancer in medical research, we must be at low risk of developing breast cancer.

What puts lesbians at risk?

In addition to the cancer risk that all women face, there are some things that put lesbians at even greater risk.

Lesbians often don't go for regular check-ups, but wait until symptoms develop or until problems become advanced. This may be because we can't afford it, don't have insurance, have had bad experiences with medical care in the past, or because we just don't think we need to be concerned about breast cancer.

Also: Women who do not give birth or delay giving birth until after age 30 are at a somewhat higher risk.

Early detection is the key.

Your chances of developing breast cancer depend on your individual history, not your sexual orientation. But lesbians are less likely to seek regular medical check ups. This can delay diagnosis and treatment, lowering our chances of survival.



**Even if you feel fine,
you still need regular
check ups.**

When breast cancer is found early, through regular mammography, clinical breast exams and breast self examination, and treated, the chances of survival are excellent. ALL women should seek breast cancer screenings.

There is a lack of research and studies on lesbians and breast cancer which would assist lesbians in taking care of their breast health needs. Don't let this lack of reporting and study lull you into inaction in basic self-care habits.

Since we don't know how to prevent cancer, the most important thing is early detection through regular breast health check-ups.

What can I do to protect myself?

- Check your breasts every month. Look and feel for changes. You can learn breast self-exam free of charge.
(see back panel for local resources)
- See your health care practitioner for a yearly exam.
- If you are over 40, get a mammogram (a low-dose x-ray of the breast) every year.

These tests can find cancer early. Women have more treatment options and a better chance of getting well if cancer is found early.

Lower your risk

Even though we don't know how to prevent breast cancer, we can lower our risk by:

- Eating a diet high in fiber, fruits and vegetables.
- Get regular exercise
- Don't smoke
- Drink alcohol only in moderation

