

Individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ are at increased risk for eating disorders due to a variety of circumstances. It is important to understand the risk factors, what to look for, and protective factors when caring for this population.

Common Risk Factors for LGBTQ+ Individuals

- ⚠️ Anti-LGBTQ+ bias and stigma
- ⚠️ Family and community rejection
- ⚠️ Gaps in access to care
- ⚠️ Media influences
- ⚠️ Unrealistic pressure to assume certain appearance expectations

Protective Factors for LGBTQ+ Individuals

- ♥️ LGBTQ+ affirming care
- ♥️ Media influences that represent a range of LGBTQ+ bodies and appearances
- ♥️ Family acceptance
- ♥️ LGBTQ+ competent health care providers
- ♥️ Emphasis on body neutrality and functionality
- ♥️ Trauma-informed care

Considerations for Transgender and Nonbinary Individuals



Transgender individuals who present with eating disorders often have a delay in identification of gender dysphoria. **Eating disorder treatment is often ineffective without the use of gender-affirming treatment at the same time.**



Eating disorder treatment for patients with gender dysphoria or who identify as transgender can fall short. Individuals note that treatments often lack a gender-affirming approach or fail to recognize that the root cause of the eating disorder is not the same as those among the cisgender population. **It is important that providers understand the nuances of gender dysphoria and euphoria.**



Integrating gender affirming approaches into care are crucial. Gender affirming approaches can foster an increased ability to gain body acceptance and satisfaction, experiences of gender euphoria, and improved overall well-being.

Important Factors to Consider

- ✔️ Eating disorders in **LGBTQ+ youth present differently** and often meet criteria for Other Specified Feeding and Eating Disorder (OSFED).
- ✔️ Sexual minority girls are **2-4 times more likely to purge or use diet pills** compared to heterosexual peers. Sexual minority boys are **3-7 times more likely to have these behaviors** as compared to heterosexual peers.¹
- ✔️ Transgender college students **report diagnoses of eating disorders** at a rate four times higher than cisgender peers.²
- ✔️ Eating disorders are **associated with serious psychiatric conditions** such as anxiety disorders, depression, substance use, and self-harm. That is why it's **critical to identify eating disorders early**, especially among individuals who face higher risks.³



Sources:

1. Austin SB, Nelson LA, Birkett MA, Calzo JP, Everett B. Eating disorder symptoms and obesity at the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation in US high school students. *Am J Public Health.* 2013 Feb;103(2):e16-22. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2012.301150. Epub 2012 Dec 13. PMID: 23237207; PMCID: PMC3558764.
2. Diemer EW, Grant JD, Munn-Chernoff MA, Patterson DA, Duncan AE. Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, and Eating-Related Pathology in a National Sample of College Students. *J Adolesc Health.* 2015 Aug;57(2):144-9. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2015.03.003. Epub 2015 Apr 28. PMID: 25937471; PMCID: PMC4545276.
3. Micali N, Solmi F, Horton NJ, et al. Adolescent Eating Disorders Predict Psychiatric, High-Risk Behaviors and Weight Outcomes in Young Adulthood. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry.* 2015;54(8):652-659.e1. doi:10.1016/j.jaac.2015.05.009.