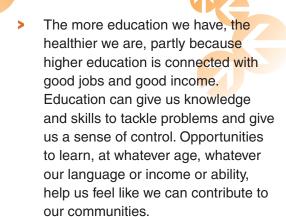# ⩒ Social Determinants of Health

We can do all sorts of things to keep ourselves healthy, like eating well, getting enough sleep, exercising, quitting smoking, seeing a doctor regularly… But when we think about health as more than just disease, we think about health care as more than doctors, nurses and hospitals. 'Social determinants of health' – things like where we live, whether we have a decent job (or any job at all), whether we have the support of friends, family and community, and how others treat us – have a big impact on our health.

> Regular income can mean enough good food to eat and a healthy place to live. We feel more connected to our community when we can afford to eat well and live in a safe place.

> People who feel lonely or isolated often feel more stress, more pain, or have more illness. People who have someone to turn to for help in a crisis, and who feel loved and cared for tend to be healthier. Being connected with friends and community resources makes us healthier.

> Racism creates terrible physical and emotional wounds. Race, ethnic background, First Nations/Metis/Inuit status and immigrant status make a difference in how we're treated, how easy or difficult it is to get basic things we need to live, and to feel safe and secure in our communities.

> The more education we have, the healthier we are, partly because higher education is connected with good jobs and good income. Education can give us knowledge and skills to tackle problems and give us a sense of control. Opportunities to learn, at whatever age, whatever our language or income or ability, help us feel like we can contribute to our communities.

> Unemployment, or low-paying, stressful jobs can make us sick. A good job can help us be healthy, feel good about ourselves, and help us feel like we can contribute and belong.

> Equality, fairness and respect – in our jobs, housing, and health care system – helps us feel like we belong to a supportive community, and helps us find resources and supports when we need them.

All sorts of things can make it hard to be/get healthy: poverty, homelessness, isolation, racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, discrimination around disability… Sometimes these things overlap, which makes staying healthy difficult and getting good health care a real hassle, or even impossible.

Get More Information and Get Involved

⩒ LGBTTTIQ Health Resources:

> **Rainbow Health Network**
www.rainbowhealthnetwork.ca
> **Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition:**
www.rainbowhealth.ca
> **Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (AU)**
www.glhv.org.au
> **LGBT Health Scotland**
www.lgbthealthscotland.org.uk/home.htm
> **Trans Health Magazine**
www.trans-health.com
> **Intersex Society of North America**
www.isna.org

⩒ Community & Research Resources:
(not necessarily LGBTTTIQ inclusive)

> **Coalition for Lesbian & Gay Rights in Ontario**
www.web.ca/clgro
> **Egale**
www.egale.ca
> **National Day Against Homophobia**
www.homophobiaday.com
> **HIV and Poverty in Canada**
www.hivandpoverty.ca
> **Information Centre on Aboriginal Health**
www.icah.ca
> **Racism, Violence and Health Project**
http://rvh.socialwork.dal.ca
> **Canadian Women's Health Network**
www.cwhn.ca

To find LGBTTTIQ services/resources in your community log on to **www.gaycanada.com**

Some materials for this pamphlet were adapted from "Count Me In! Tools for an Inclusive Ontario (Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse, 2005)

⩒ What Are Social Determinants of Health for LGBTTTIQ* People?

Rainbow Health Network

*   lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, Two-Spirit, intersex, and queer

Homophobia, Biphobia, Transphobia and Heterosexism
Make Us Sick

Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexism have serious consequences for our health.

As individuals, we may have amazing strengths that help us survive homo/bi/transphobia in our daily lives.

Our communities may provide us with social support and positive personal and group identities. But our health is still affected. Because of violence and threats of violence, isolation, invisibility, self-denial, and discrimination in education, employment, housing and health care, our communities experience:

> higher levels of depression and suicide;

> higher rates of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use; and

> greater risks for sexually transmitted infections.

Discrimination against LGBTTTIQ people (along with other barriers like poverty and racism) can make it difficult for us to make and nurture friendships, find supportive faith communities, and find support for our relationships with partners and children. It can make it difficult to get the education we need, to find and keep good jobs, and to find safe, affordable housing.

Because of discrimination, we also have difficulty getting good quality health care – we often don't seek out health care as often as we need, or we delay getting care until health conditions are more serious.

Thinking About Health

Being healthy is more than not being sick. It's about feeling well – in your body, in your mind, and in your connections with other people.

It's about how well you can meet your needs, achieve your goals, and cope with the situation you're in.

How Are Our Communities Responding?

While it's important to look after ourselves, getting/staying healthy is about more than eating lots of vegetables and getting enough sleep.

In order to be healthy, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transsexual, transgendered, Two-Spirit and intersex people must be treated fairly, with dignity, and without prejudice. The places we live, work, play and learn must be supportive and affirming.

We also must have health care and support services that we can access and that meet our needs.

With the help of friends and allies, we are building communities that offer the conditions for good health.

Rainbow Health Network

For example:

> Sexual orientation is now recognized by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms – we have a right to be protected from discrimination no matter what our sexual orientation. But we have work to do to make sure the rights of trans people are protected.

> Our communities are reaching out to LGBTTTIQ folks who have low incomes or who are homeless or isolated. We are reaching out to LGBTTTIQ youth who have been rejected or abused. We are reaching out to LGBTTTIQ seniors and working to ensure that nursing homes and long-term care facilities are welcoming and supportive.

> Our communities are offering training and education on LGBTTTIQ issues to workers in health care settings, homes for the aged and nursing homes, schools, and social services.

When we stand together and support each other, we are stronger. When we work with others who seek justice and fairness, we help create healthy communities for everyone.