

Fact Sheet

Lesbian



Some women are attracted to other women. They are called lesbians or they are also called homosexuals. It is OK to be lesbian.

A lesbian woman has sexy thoughts and feelings about other women. Some women like other women but are not sure if they are lesbian. That is OK.



Some women are attracted to both women and men. They are called bisexual. It is OK to be bisexual. For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Bisexual'.

Coming out

Some women tell other people that they are lesbian

Some women tell their family and friends that they are lesbian. This is called 'coming out'.

It is up to a person to decide if they want to tell other people. They should only tell another person if they are comfortable to. Coming out is an important step for some women to feel good about being lesbian.

Some women might find it hard to come out

Some lesbian women find it hard to come out to their family and friends. They might keep their feelings about being lesbian a secret. They might worry that other people will not understand or will not be supportive. Some women might worry that people will treat them differently if they know they are a lesbian.

It is up to a woman to decide who she wants to tell. Some lesbian women decide to only tell people they trust. Most people will be very accepting and happy that they have been told.

If a person needs support with being a lesbian or coming out they should talk to someone they trust. There are services that can provide support.

For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Where to go for help and advice'.



Relationships

Lesbian women may have different types of relationships in their lives.

There are different ways to meet others

Some lesbian women like to go places to meet other women. Some lesbian women meet in lesbian bars or clubs. There are different types of groups for lesbian women to meet other lesbian women.

These groups include:

- Social groups for lesbian women
- Support groups for lesbian women
- Sports groups
- School groups
- Festivals such as Mardi Gras or Pride Week

These groups can help women to make new friends. It is also a way to feel supported within a community.

For more information about support services, go to the fact sheet called 'Where to go for help and advice'.

Some women want a close relationship with another woman

Sometimes a woman meets another woman she really likes. She might ask another woman to go on a date. After getting to know each other they might start a close relationship together. This is different to a friendship as both women have sexy feelings about each other.

Some women live together in a close relationship with their girlfriend. People can only have someone as their girlfriend if both people want it.

For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Relationships'.

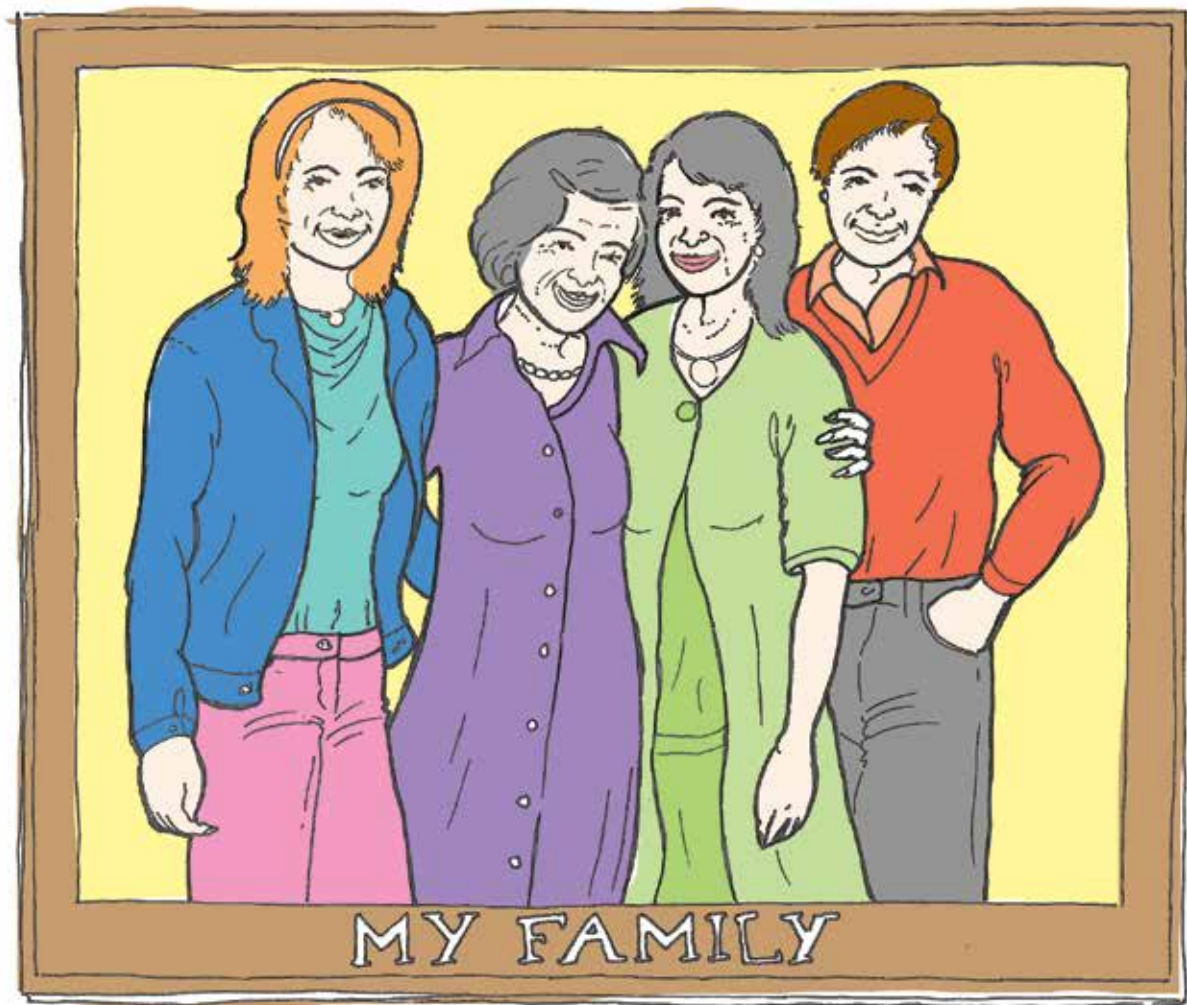
Some lesbian women want to get married

Some lesbian women in a close relationship want to get married. At this time a woman can't marry another woman in Australia. Some couples go overseas to a country that allows lesbian women to get married.

Some lesbian women want to have a family

Some lesbian women want to have children. That is OK. There are different ways that lesbian women can have children. Having children can be wonderful but it can also be hard work.

Some people choose not to have children. That is OK. People also have happy lives without having children.



Sexual health

Having sex

For a woman, there are many different ways to have sex:

- When people make each other feel good by touching each other. This is called sexy touch
- When a person kisses and licks a woman's vagina. This is called oral sex
- When a woman puts a sex toy (dildo) into another woman's vagina

It is OK to have sex in these ways if both people want to. A person should only have sex the way that they want to.

For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Having sex'.



Safe sex

When people have sex, it is important that they protect themselves from catching a sexually transmissible infection (STI).

For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Safe sex and sexually transmissible infections'.

Sexual health check-ups

It is important for women who have sex to go to their doctor, a Family Planning clinic or sexual health clinic for regular sexual health check-ups. Some tests that are important for women to have are Pap tests, STI tests and breast screening. It is important for a woman to find a doctor that she is comfortable with.

For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Private body parts – keeping them healthy'.

Discrimination

Some lesbian women have bad things happen to them

Some women have bad things happen to them because they are lesbian. They might get called names, left out of things, or hit. This is called discrimination or homophobia. Homophobia can make a person feel really bad about themselves. It is wrong to hurt a person for being lesbian.

Some people think that it is wrong to be lesbian. This is not true.

What to do about homophobia

If homophobia happens to a lesbian woman and they feel bad about it, they can:

- Tell someone they trust
- Call a counselling service
- Report it to the Police or the Anti-Violence Project

For more information go to the 'Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender support services in NSW' section of the fact sheet 'Where to go for help and advice'.

The rainbow community

Some lesbian women do not know other lesbian women to talk to. They might feel alone and that they are the only lesbian person. This is not true. There are lots of other lesbian women. This is called the 'lesbian community'. The community also includes gay, bisexual and transgender people. Some people call this community the 'rainbow community'.



The symbol of the rainbow community is the rainbow flag. This flag represents the rainbow community coming together and feeling good about who they are.

For more information go to the fact sheets called 'Gay', 'Bisexual' and 'Transgender'.