

Alcohol and other drugs

We drink alcohol and use substances for many reasons: for pleasure, to wind down, to relax with friends or to enhance a night out. Sometimes we drink or use drugs to dull the senses or to help us sleep.

As women we can start conversations in our communities about how we drink and use substances, and plan more alcohol and drug free activities together.

For practical information and support about drug and alcohol use in LGBTI communities, visit www.touchbase.org.au

Mental health and wellbeing

While many lesbian, bisexual, queer and same sex attracted women live happy, healthy and productive lives, there are a range of mental health issues which affect a disproportionate number of women in our communities.

As women we can build healthier and more resilient communities that are proactive about caring for each other's emotional health and wellbeing.

For factsheets, tools and support, or to take a 1-minute checklist, visit www.beyondblue.org.au

Healthy relationships

Most relationships are built on love and respect. Some are built on abuse and control. Domestic and family violence can happen in any kind of relationship, but the information available is usually for non-LGBTI couples. Living in a smaller community can also make it harder to speak up or seek help.

As women we can foster a supportive and safe environment to have discussions around our relationships, and get the skills to feel confident about stepping in when someone we care about needs support.

For more information and resources on healthy LGBTIQ relationships, visit www.sayitoutloud.org.au

Services in the area:

Women's Health - Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District

Free Well Women's Clinics and education together with health and wellbeing advocacy for all women

Illawarra: 4221 6723 | 0477 723 421

Nowra: 4424 6320 | 0401 991 684

Ulladulla: 4455 5366

ACON Regional Outreach

Works with LGBTI communities, people with HIV & mainstream services to support local referrals, groups and initiatives, and to extend ACON's campaigns & programs.

02 9206 2113 | regionaloutreach@acon.org.au

Illawarra Women's Health Centre

Female doctor, counselling, pap smears, breast checks, domestic violence support, nutritionist & alternative therapies.
4255 6800 | info@womenshealthcentre.com.au

Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre

Women's health nurse, counselling and alternative therapies
4421 0730 | swhc@swhc.org.au

Waminda—South Coast Women's Health & Welfare Aboriginal Corporation

Empowering and supporting women and their Aboriginal families of the Shoalhaven

4421 7400 | administration@waminda.org.au

www.waminda.org.au

Inner City Legal Centre—Safe Relationships Project

Specialised legal advice for LGBTIQ domestic violence

9332 1966 | srp@iclc.org.au

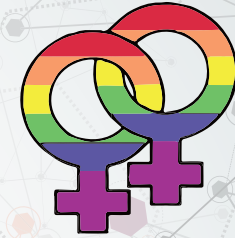
QLife

Phone & online counselling for LGBTIQ people

1800 18 4527 | [www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)

The Labrys Project: www.acon.org.au/labrys

the **Labrys** project



As Women We Can

Promoting the health and wellbeing of lesbian, bisexual, queer and same sex attracted women living in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven.



Health
Illawarra Shoalhaven
Local Health District



The Labrys Project is a collaboration between Women's Health - Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District and ACON.

In 2014 and 2015, the Labrys Project conducted a community based survey and series of focus groups, exploring issues affecting the lives of lesbian, bisexual, queer and same sex attracted women living in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven.

Lesbian, bisexual, queer (LBO) and same sex attracted women can face a range of factors that impact our health and wellbeing in unique ways.

The Labrys is a double-headed axe, which became a symbol of strength and self-sufficiency for the lesbian and feminist movements in the 1970's. The Labrys continues to represent the pride and strength of our communities today.



This resource highlights important issues that emerged from the research as well as practical tips for improving our own health and wellbeing.

As women we can be leaders of our own health and wellbeing.

General health

You told us your GP was an important source of information about physical and mental health. Having an open, trusting relationship with a regular GP can improve your likelihood of having a comprehensive assessment, receiving thorough medical care and accessing preventive screening (including sexual health screening).

If you don't already have a trusted GP, visit www.doclist.com.au for a list of GPs recommended by lesbians and bisexual women in Australia.

Health screening

Screening for human papillomavirus (HPV) is important regardless of who you have sex with. HPV causes most genital and anal cancers and on 1 December 2017, the two-yearly cytology (Pap) screening will be replaced with five-yearly screen for the human papillomavirus (HPV). The screening age will be raised to 25. If you are due, make sure you get a Pap before December.

You are entitled to feel safe and comfortable during an HPV screen and sexual health screen. Your GP, Women's Health Nurse or health centre can explain the process to you before you decide to have one. It is also recommended that all sexually active women get an annual sexual health screen.

For more information, visit the National Cervical Screening Program at www.cancerscreening.gov.au

Check out ACON's sexual health resource and art project for women who play with women Claude at www.iloveclaudie.com

Breast self-examination

Most breast cancers are discovered through self-examination, so it's important to check your breasts every month and see a health professional if you notice any changes. Mammograms are also recommended every 2 years from age 50.

For instructions and more information on breast screening for our communities visit www.acon.org.au/talk-touch-test www.breastscreen.nsw.gov.au/

Our bodies

We recognise that weight isn't the be-all and end-all of health and wellbeing.

However, your body mass index (BMI) can be a general indicator of your risk for developing a range of chronic diseases and illnesses.

It is important to make sure we love our bodies by drinking enough water, eating a diverse range of fruit, veggies and other nutritious food and by moving our bodies with the exercise we enjoy the most.

To find out your BMI, visit www.geathealthynsw.com.au/bmi-calculator

As women we can experience health at every size.

Living in a regional or rural environment can mean we spend more time travelling by car, at desk jobs or watching TV. Depending on our circumstances, we could be eating more fast food and doing less planned exercise as well.

Women in Australia can experience barriers to maintaining regular exercise such as lack of time, motivation, energy, money or caring demands.

As women we can make time in our everyday lives to nourish our bodies.

Self-care can include making time for your favourite physical activity, cooking a delicious meal at home or creating intimacy with our partner/s.

Choosing 'incidental exercise', such as parking a little further from work and walking the rest of the way, taking the stairs between floors or even taking to the dance floor are great ways to get our bodies moving.

For more information about nutrition, visit www.eatforhealth.gov.au/eating-well/tips-eating-well

For more information about active living, visit www.heartfoundation.org.au/active-living