

2008/9 Edition



Reg. Charity No. 1070904

THANKS FOR THE MAMMARIES

**A celebration of
yours and hers
- for women who
have sex with women**



THANK YOU

This booklet has been written and produced by the Lesbian and Gay Foundation.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our advertisers for their support of this vital work. If you are a business or community group interested in getting involved with the LGF's agenda for women, or if you are interested in our design consultancy service, please contact us at:

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Designed by Lisa Partington 07900244862

INTRODUCTION

Information out there for lesbian and bisexual women is sparse, and often involves little or no celebration about who we are, particularly when it comes to our bodies.

In order to redress this, the Lesbian and Gay Foundation have produced this resource to explore and celebrate all things breast related!

You've got them yourself and you're probably attracted to others, so we thought an informative celebration of breasts would be a good starting place! It's also got some all important health information in it too.

This booklet looks at a range of things such as information on what boobs actually are; sizes; age changes; bras; boobs and sex; pregnancy and breast cancer. It's important to know what they're about and what could go wrong or right with them.

We hope you enjoy this guide and learn a little along the way.

Celebrate yours and celebrate hers – double the fun!

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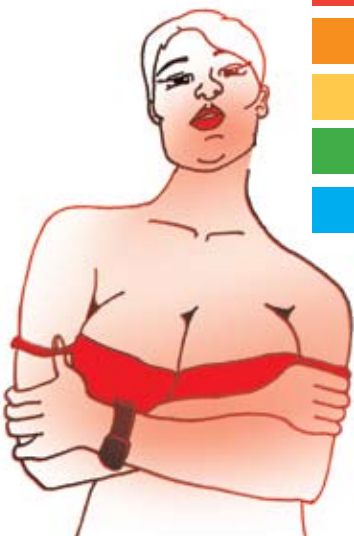
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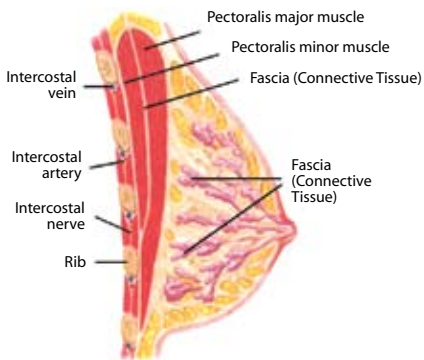
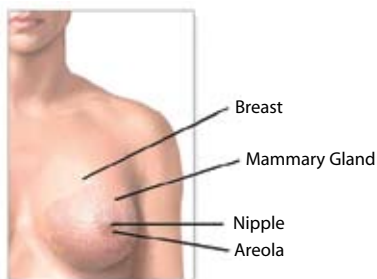
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SO WHAT'S UP THERE?

Getting to know yours, and her breasts can be fun and also very important and knowing how your breasts look and feel can help in the early detection of breast cancer.



SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING

Many women worry about their boobs being too big, too small, too droopy, not pert enough, not equal sizes...and looking at the images available in the media, this insecurity isn't really surprising. However in the real world boobs come in many glorious forms. No two pairs are the same, which makes it all the more interesting!

Big, small, round, pear-shaped or pancake-like; your boobs are your boobs and we hope you love them! However, many women do feel insecure about the size and shape of their breasts.



If they're 'too big' then women often feel uncomfortable about the kind of attention they might attract, and can suffer back pain due to weight strain.

On the other hand, women often complain of feeling unattractive if they think their breasts are 'too small'. Whilst it would be great if everyone embraced their breast size and shape, many people feel unable to, due to physical or psychological discomfort and there are options available if this is the case. Many women use padded bra's or inserts and find this works for them.

SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING

CONTINUED

There are many herbal products on the market which are said to enlarge breasts, however the effectiveness of these is dubious! The most 'drastic' option would be plastic surgery to either reduce, enlarge or lift.

It's a big decision to make as it's permanent and like any operation, there could be complications. So think long and hard about the reason you want surgery, weigh up all the options and talk to your doctor about it.

If you find your breasts changing size, it could be due to a number of reasons such as weight gain or loss, age, infection or inflammation. To veer on the safe side it should always be investigated by a health professional. It is important to be aware that the size and feel of breasts usually fluctuates during the menstrual cycle, particularly with premenstrual water retention.

Not only will your breasts be different from other women's breasts, but you will probably find that your own breasts may differ. The majority of women have some difference in breast size and this is nothing to be concerned about, unless the size difference hasn't always been there.

Remember that everyone's breasts are different. What's important is the way you feel about your breasts and that, whatever their shape or size, you come to accept them as a unique and beautiful part of you!

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THE SEX BIT

Tabooed, worshipped and sometimes exploited, the female breast is a visible, tangible and sexy feature of the female body. Soft, round, large, small, pert, pendulous, let's face it – every girl loves a bosom for a pillow. And when it comes to sex; touching, squeezing, licking, sucking and pinching your lover's nipples and breasts can really help to get the party started.

We're all different and unique, so as such, some of us will like having our boobs stimulated more than others. Talk to each other and tell her what you like and don't like. And bear in mind that pre-menstrual breasts can be tender, so full on stimulation at certain times of the month probably won't be appreciated!

Breasts are a part of sexual anatomy that is unrelated to reproduction, and in society in general, they have a great deal of erotic allure and sexual symbolism.

It is not at all unusual to see a large-breasted woman used in advertisements to sell everything from beer to cars, primarily aimed at the straight boys of course.

As a result of the almost universal association of a woman's breasts with femininity, sexuality, and attractiveness, we are bombarded on an almost daily basis with the not so subtle suggestion that a woman with large breasts has a definite sexual advantage; thus, conversely, a woman with small breasts must be less sexually interested and skilled.

The reality is size really doesn't matter when it comes to stimulation! Whatever you've got and whatever she's got – be proud of your breasts and enjoy yours and hers!

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www.pridegames.org



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THE BRA!

The bra, what a fabulous invention. It covers, it supports, it elevates your breasts to a new height, and it gave rise to one of the most iconic advertising campaigns ever, (often copied but never surpassed in our opinion). Hello Girls.....

The bra has been around in some shape or form for thousands of years. A bra-like garment was worn by Minoan women on the island of Crete, which both supported and revealed their bare breasts in emulation of the 'snake goddess'.

Vogue magazine first coined the word 'brassiere' in 1907 and around the same time feminist organisations warned against the risks of wearing corsets and called for 'emancipation garments'.

They, and the rest of the women across the world, had to wait until American socialite Mary Phelps Jacob made her own underwear from two silk hankies and some ribbon in 1913.

She was granted the first US patent for the bra the following year.

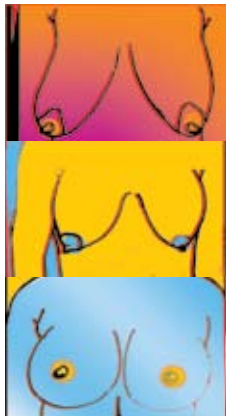


WHY SHOULD YOU WEAR A BRA?

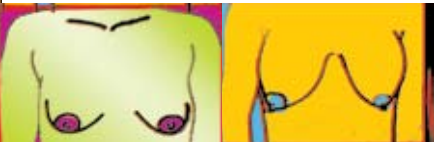
There are a number of reasons you should wear a bra, the main ones being support and to stop your lovely lady assets travelling south to befriend your knees!

To try and prevent the inevitable sagging, allow your breasts to be free of bras whenever possible, so the ligaments can relax.

You shouldn't sleep in your bra, as again it prevents relaxing. However, if you are a sporty type, a sports bra is recommended to ensure you are fully supported during any sporting activity!



It is very important to wear the right size bra, it is said that 80% of all women wear the wrong size bra. Although you may be shy or worried about getting your boobs out, please go and get them measured by a professional fitter. Most department stores offer a free service. There are lots of types of bras and there will definitely be one out there for you.



AGE CHANGES



As breasts are mostly composed of adipose tissue, (a name check for all you Doctor Who fans out there), their size can change over time.

The appearance and function of the breasts are controlled by changes in hormones. The breasts are constantly changing from puberty, adolescence, the childbearing years and into the menopause. Changes are a normal part of getting older.

Breasts begin to form during fetal development, with a thickening in the chest area called the mammary ridge or milk line. By the time a female infant is born, a nipple and the beginnings of the milk-duct system have formed.

One of the first signs of puberty is when the breasts start developing. Many girls start to get “breast buds” (mounds or bumps around or under the nipple) at an average age of 11, although it can start at a younger or older age.

Shortly after the development of “breast buds” the entire breast will start to get larger. The nipple and areola (the area around the nipple) will get darker and form a separate, small mound. This whole process, from “flat” to “finish” takes from 2 to 3 years. Some girls develop more quickly than others and the majority of adult women have one breast that’s bigger than the other.



Once the breasts have developed, changes linked to the monthly menstrual cycle are common.

Just before a period, breasts may become larger, tender or feel a bit lumpy. After a period, this lumpiness becomes less obvious or may disappear altogether although some women may have tender, lumpy breasts all the time.

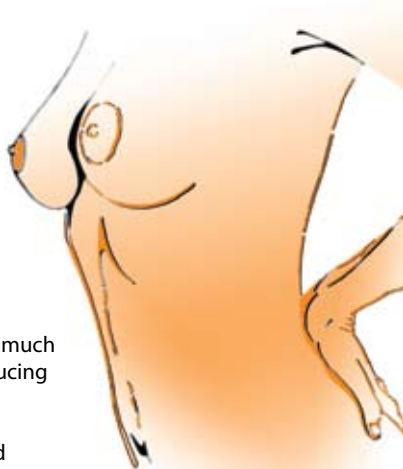
During pregnancy, the breasts get much larger as the number of milk-producing cells increases.

Around the menopause lumps and tenderness are common. The lumps often turn out to be breast cysts (benign fluid-filled sacs, which are not dangerous).

Breast tissue also changes with age and begins to lose its firmness when the milk-producing tissue is replaced by fat, making the breasts sag. This is more noticeable after the menopause, when oestrogen levels fall.

As you grow older, your breasts may change size too. If you take HRT (hormone replacement therapy) your breasts may feel firmer and sometimes quite tender. The breasts naturally head southwards through aging, as the ligaments become elongated.

Like any body part, breasts change as you get older, but it is perfectly normal and all part of being human.



NIPPLES

Nipples are small projections of the skin which are surrounded by an area of pigmented skin known as the areola. Like breasts, nipples vary greatly in size, colour, texture and shape from woman to woman. The primary, physical reason we have nipples is to breast feed. However, being surrounded by nerve endings and blood vessels they are also a place of pleasure, which we're sure you're all aware of!

Erect or Inverted

When stimulated by touch, friction, temperature, or through sexual arousal, blood flowing through the vessels often causes the nipples to become erect and more sensitive. Nipples that are tucked into the breast are called inverted nipples. If your nipple has been inverted for as long as you can remember, it's probably nothing to worry about; it's just the way you are. However, if your nipple suddenly becomes inverted, it could be a sign of something more serious so get it checked out.

For women who don't have the natural tweaked effect of erected nipples, yet would like them, there are a few tricks you could try. You could place an ice cube wrapped in a flannel on your areola, or try stroking the areola with warm hands to bring the nipple out. Alternatively you could wear breast shields. If this doesn't work, it is possible to have a small operation. This may however cause difficulty if you want to breastfeed in the future and is costly, so discuss this further with a health professional.

Hairy Nipples

Hairs around the nipple are quite common and nothing to be concerned by. However, if you'd rather be hair free, you can pull them out with tweezers, but this can cause irritation so it's probably better simply to cut them off close to the skin.

Discharge

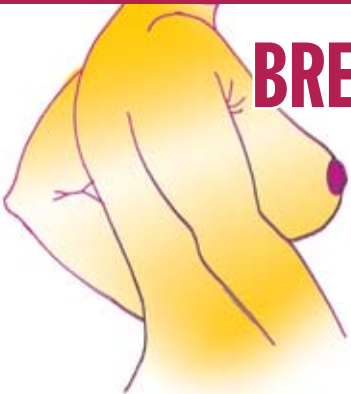
Nipple discharge is fairly common and it is usually harmless. In fact, most women can squeeze some discharge out of their nipples, though we don't advise that you try! Discharge may be whitish, yellow-green or almost black. Nipple discharge can however be a symptom of breast cancer, particularly if it's bloodstained, so it is advised to visit your doctor if you experience any discharge.

Piercing

Many women choose to pierce their nipples because they like the way it looks. Nipple piercings are also said to provide constant stimulation, and of course they will give your partner something extra to play with during sex! However, it can be a painful piercing to have, and like any open wound, there is risk of infection so be careful!

If you have any concerns about your nipples then contact a health professional to put your mind at ease – but the likelihood is that they'll be perfectly normal, so enjoy them!

(Interestingly it's considered that the Milky Way is so named, because the ancient Greeks thought it was made from drops of milk from the breasts of the Greek goddess Hera).



BREAST CANCER

Thanks to earlier detection and better treatment, more women are surviving breast cancer.

However, it stills remains the most common cancer in the UK with over 44,000 women being diagnosed each year.

WHAT IS BREAST CANCER?

The breast is made up of millions of cells. Breast cancer develops when a single cell begins to multiply out of control and forms a tumour. These tumourous cells may break away, and travel to other parts of the body forming new tumours.

BREAST AWARENESS:

Being breast aware is a normal part of general body awareness. It is a process of getting to know your own breasts and becoming familiar with their appearance.

You can become familiar with your breasts by looking and feeling them – you can do this in any way you like – this can be in the shower, the bath or when dressing.

“Only 30% of lesbian and bisexual women check their breasts for lumps or changes every month and 50% check every few months”. (Prescription for Change, Stonewall, 2008).

THE BREAST AWARENESS 5-POINT CODE:

- 1 **KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL FOR YOU**
- 2 **KNOW WHAT CHANGES TO LOOK AND FEEL FOR**
- 3 **LOOK AND FEEL**
- 4 **REPORT ANY CHANGES TO YOUR GP WITHOUT DELAY**
- 5 **ATTEND ROUTINE BREAST SCREENING IF YOU ARE AGED 50 OR OVER**

WHAT INCREASES YOUR RISKS?

There are a number of factors that may increase your risk of getting breast cancer. Below are a few examples:

Age

The risk of developing breast cancer is strongly linked to age. The older you are, the higher your risk of developing the disease. However, it's still possible for younger women to develop breast cancer.

Family History

The majority of breast cancer cases are not hereditary; although having breast cancer in your family can increase your chances of developing the condition. Your risk is greater if you have several close relatives who have had it, or a mother or sister who developed the disease before the age of 50 or before menopause.

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer. The more you drink each day, the greater your risk.

WHAT INCREASES YOUR RISKS? - Continued

Obesity

If you are postmenopausal, and you are overweight, you may be more at risk of developing breast cancer.

The Pill

Taking oral contraceptives may cause a small increase in risk, but your risk gradually returns to normal after you stop taking them.

HRT

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is associated with a slightly increased risk of developing breast cancer. Both combined HRT and oestrogen-only HRT can increase your risk of developing breast cancer, although the risk is slightly higher again if you take combined HRT.

Pregnancy

Pregnancy has a complex effect on breast cancer risk. In general it is believed to have both short and long term effects on the risk of developing the disease. Over the long term, having a baby reduces the risk of developing breast cancer and women who have their first child at a younger age have a greater reduction in their risk.

For example, a woman who has her first child before the age of 20 has a lower risk of breast cancer than a woman who has her first child after 30 or a woman who has not had children at all. The risk of breast cancer also slightly decreases the more children a woman has and the earlier she has them.

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BREAST CANCER

CONTINUED

Getting to know yourself:

Earlier detection of breast cancer can result in simpler and more effective treatment. It is important to remember that everyone's breasts look and feel different. It's normal to regularly have lumpy breasts, and to have tenderness or pain around your period. A good time to check your breasts is right after your period.

There is no right or wrong way of checking for breast cancer. Get into a habit of looking at and feeling your breasts. This will allow you to feel confident about noticing any changes.

Remember to check all parts of your breast, your armpit and up to your collar bone. Looking in a mirror may help you to notice any changes to the shape of your breasts.

When checking your breasts, try to be aware of any changes that are different for you. These could include:

- A change in shape and size
- A lump or thickening in your breast or armpit
- Dimpling of the skin (like the texture of orange peel)
- Discharge from the nipple
- A rash on your nipple or surrounding area
- Nipples becoming inverted or changing shape or position
- Discomfort or pain in the breast or armpit

If you notice any changes, it is always a good idea to visit your doctor. Most changes are not due to cancer, so although it may be hard, it is important not to worry. You can always take someone you trust with you, and can ask to see a female doctor if you prefer.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

All patients suspected of having breast cancer must be seen by a hospital specialist within 2 weeks of an urgent referral by their GP. To make an accurate diagnosis, doctors need to carry out a thorough examination. This may include using an ultrasound and mammogram. They may also take blood, chest x-rays and a tissue sample for examination.

If the result is positive for cancer, the appropriate treatment will then be determined. The exact treatment used, how soon it's given, and how long it takes, all depends on several factors, including:

- The stage of the tumour (how far it has spread) and whether there is secondary cancer (if it has spread to other parts of the body)
- The general fitness of the patient
- The menopausal status of the patient
- The patient's own wishes

If it is felt treatment will not be effective, a mastectomy (removal of the breast) may have to take place. Early detection and improved treatment has meant that death rates due to breast cancer in the UK have dropped in recent years.

ROUTINE SCREENING:

As the majority of breast cancers occur in people between 50 – 70 years old, women who are registered with a doctor and within this age range are invited every 3 years for a mammogram (breast x-ray). Women under 50 and over 70 are not routinely screened, but if you have a family history or notice any changes, then see your GP.

“Over 1 in 12 lesbian and bisexual women aged between 50 – 79 have been diagnosed with breast cancer, compared with 1 in 20 of women in general.” (Prescription for Change, Stonewall, 2008).

Lesbian and bisexual women may be at higher risk due to lifestyle choices, as statistics show LB women are more likely to smoke, drink more and be over weight.

PREGNANT BOOBS

As more and more of us (and by us we mean lesbian and bisexual women) are getting pregnant, and this guide is about boobs, we thought we should look at pregnant boobs!

Many women can start to realise they are pregnant through the breast changes they experience; you may first notice an increase in size and possibly tenderness, very early on before the pregnancy is confirmed.

During pregnancy, breasts grow larger under the influence of hormones. This growth is a positive sign that the breasts are preparing for breastfeeding.

The progesterone hormone increases the size of the alveoli (the milk producing units of the breast). The lobes, which are sections of the alveoli and connecting ducts inside the breast, allow the milk to flow from the alveoli where the milk is made, to the openings in the nipple.

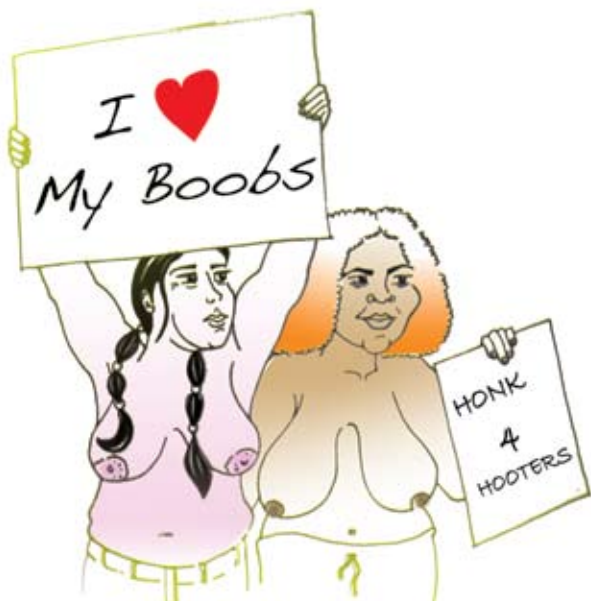
Picture the structure of the alveoli and the connecting ducts as mini bunches of grapes. The alveoli would take the place of the grapes and the ducts take the place of the stems. The lobes would be one complete bunch of grapes with the top of the stem ending at the nipple.

Also, women may notice the areola (the dark, circular part around the nipple), increase in diameter and get deeper in colour. It is said that the dark colour of the areola acts as a way of helping the newborn easily identify the nipple.

The Montgomery glands, the small pimple-like glands on the areola, excrete a substance which prevents the areola from becoming infected. So women should avoid using soap, or doing any preparation such as “toughening” the nipples, since this may interfere with the effectiveness of the Montgomery glands.

The best thing a mother can do to prepare for breastfeeding is to become well informed. Attend a breastfeeding class or even a mother’s breastfeeding support group and make sure you become familiar with the local breastfeeding related services.

Please see page 30 for further information on breast feeding.



A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

"I love my boobs. They're pert, firm and fabulous."

Emma 33

"Well I will just say that sometimes my wife wonders why I don't look at her face all the time! I just love them, I love everything about them and they are indeed something that could make you believe in some sort of god!"

Megan 62

"I love boobs – especially the fact they've got little bumps on to say "suck here!"

Helen 43

"I love my girlfriend's boobs because they're just perfect. They're SO soft and smooth. I love her nipples too, especially how they get when she's excited. She can fit a party ring biscuit on them!"

Diana 23

"Boobs are the best part of a woman!"

Samantha 41

"They are somewhere to rest your weary head!"

Sarah 56

"I am a big fan of boobs, mine and any woman's! They are very sexual, soft and sensitive!"

Julia 31



BEATING ABOUT THE BUSH

A guide to sex and sexual health for women who have sex with women

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Coyotes Bar
0161 236 4007
www.coyotesbar.co.uk

Vanilla
0161 657 8890
www.vanillagirls.co.uk

Lesbian Diners
07813 083 242
www.lesbiandiners.co.uk

LIVERPOOL

Lesbian Book Group
clairemawplsey@yahoo.co.uk

Girls Go Down / Girls, Girls, Films!
www.girlsgodownevents.com

Divas Social Group
Lynsey.Jones@armistead.nwest.nhs.uk

BLACKPOOL

Lucy's Two
01253 753598

LEEDS

Blayde's Bar
01132 445 590

CUMBRIA

Cumbria Lesbians Network
cnetwork@sky.com

TODMORDEN

Todmorden Women's Disco
www.myspace.com/tod_disco

HEBDEN BRIDGE

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www.nelsonswinebar.co.uk

Bar Place
01422 842874
www.barplace.co.uk

LANCASTER

Lavender Lounge
www.lavenderlounge.co.uk

Dancing Divas
www.lavenderlounge.co.uk/id19.html

Lezzie Camp
www.lezziecamp.co.uk

Lunettes Social Group
lunettes@btinternet.com

CHESTER

Female Social Group
www.female.webeden.co.uk

STOCKPORT

Stockport Youth Service
Support Group
0161 477 4096
thebase@stockport.gov.uk

USEFUL CONTACTS

Please find below just a selection of some useful numbers for women who identify as either lesbian or bisexual.

FOR ALL WOMEN



Reg. Charity No. 1070904

The Lesbian & Gay Foundation Helpline

6-10pm every evening
0845 3 30 30 30

helpline@lgf.org.uk
www.lgf.org.uk



Body Positive Northwest
Support for HIV positive women.

0161 882 2200
email: info@bpnw.org.uk
www.bpnw.org.uk



The Lesbian Community Project

0161 273 7128

email:
mail@manchesterlcp.org.uk
www.manchesterlcp.org.uk

FOR YOUNGER WOMEN



The Albert Kennedy Trust
Providing support for homeless L&B women.

0161 228 3308
email: manchester@akt.org.uk
www.akt.org.uk

biphoria

Biphoria

Support for women who identify as bisexual 07941 811 124
email mail@biphoria.org.uk



Lik:t
Answer phone:
0161 273 7838

email: co-ordinator@likt.org.uk
www.likt.org.uk



George House Trust

Support for HIV positive women
0161 274 4499
email: ght@ght.org.uk
www.ght.org.uk



Lesbian and Gay Youth Manchester

Answer phone: 0161 273 7838
email: info@lgym.org.uk
www.lgym.org.uk

For more contacts around the north west, pick up **outnorthwest** magazine, visit www.lgf.org.uk or check **The Lesbian Community Project's** newsletter.

USEFUL LINKS

For women looking for information and support on breast cancer, please check out the sites below. They cover topics including understanding breast cancer and preventing it, how it is detected, how it is treated and how to check yourself.

Breakthrough breast cancer
www.breakthrough.org.uk



Breast Cancer Care
www.breastcancercare.org.uk



Cancer Research UK
www.cancerresearchuk.org



Macmillan
www.macmillan.org.uk



For support and information on breast feeding, please check out the sites below. They contain lots of information on how to breastfeed and where to access further support if required.

www.breastfeeding.nhs.uk

www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

www.breastfeeding.co.uk





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