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:**