HIV INFORMED

Tackling HIV Stigma

HIV: Key Facts You Need To Know

HIV is not passed on by everyday contact. There is no risk from hugging, sharing food, sharing toilets, or touching.

HIV is now a manageable health condition. Treatment allows people to live long, healthy lives.

People on effective treatment cannot pass the virus on to others. For many people, taking just one tablet a day means the virus cannot be detected in the bloodstream, and cannot be passed on.

HIV is not transmitted through routine care. Standard infection control measures are safe and effective.

What is Stigma?

The What

Stigma isn't always obvious — it can show up as:

Wearing extra gloves or PPE for someone living with HIV.
Avoiding physical touch.
Handling their personal items differently.
Asking unnecessary or intrusive questions about their HIV status.
Speaking with fear, pity or judgement. Even if unintended, these actions can make people feel ashamed, excluded or unsafe.

Why Do We Need to Tackle Stigma?

The Why

People may avoid health and care services because they fear being judged.
Stigma can negatively impact mental health, leading to stress, anxiety or depression.
Stigma may stop someone from sharing their status or important health information, affecting their safety and care.
Stigma fuels misinformation, making it harder for people to live openly and with dignity.

How You Can Help Tackle HIV Stigma

The How

Treat everyone with dignity and respect, regardless of their HIV status.
Use supportive language — say "living with HIV," not "infected."
Do not take unnecessary precautions - they create fear, not safety.
Challenge misinformation or stigma when you hear it.
Stay informed - facts stop fear.

Important Things To Remember

- Stigma can be more damaging than the virus itself.
- How someone is treated affects whether they seek care, stay well, and feel safe.
- A calm, confident, informed approach builds trust and inclusion.