

Myths and facts

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When thinking about stigma and discrimination, a good place to start might be to consider how irrational and wrong we are.

Stigma and discrimination are usually based on ignorance and prejudice. There are some common misconceptions about HIV, and it's worth reminding yourself that these views are factually incorrect.

Myth: People with HIV are a public health risk

In fact, HIV is difficult to catch. It cannot be picked up during day-to-day contact and good hygiene practices are enough to protect healthcare workers.

You can prevent passing on HIV to sexual partners by using condoms. Mother-to-child transmission of HIV can be prevented in nearly all cases with the right treatment and care.

Myth: HIV is a death sentence

Yes, untreated HIV can be fatal and people do still become ill because of HIV. But HIV treatment is highly effective.

Most people who receive HIV treatment at the right time, take it as prescribed, and look after their health will live a long and healthy life.

Myth: HIV treatment is too expensive

HIV treatment is highly cost-effective and enables people to live full and productive lives.

Without treatment, people with HIV will eventually become extremely ill. They will then need medical care that is much more expensive than HIV drugs.

Myth: Finding out you have HIV is the end of the world

Being diagnosed with HIV will change your life. Some people with HIV experience health problems, loneliness, exclusion, poverty or unhappiness. All too often, such experiences are related to the discrimination that people with HIV experience from others, the fear of being rejected, or because they blame themselves for the situation they are in.

But in time, many HIV-positive people maintain and form new close relationships, have the support of their families, have children without putting others at risk of HIV, have fulfilling love and sex lives, maintain and develop careers, and make plans for the future