



## REDUCE HIV/AIDS STIGMA

HIV when treated appropriately, is no longer a life-threatening disease, but rather a manageable chronic illness. HIV positive individuals receiving treatment can live long and healthy lives.

Despite this, there is still a significant stigma attached to being HIV positive. To such an extent, that:

- › Many people avoid being tested
- › Individuals engage in unprotected sex, ignoring the dangers
- › Individuals who have tested positive choose not to access care as this will disclose their status.

In fact, roughly 1 in 8 people living with HIV aren't accessing health services because of stigma and discrimination.

While there is ongoing awareness created about HIV and Aids, particularly around World Aids Day on 1 December every year, there is still ignorance, misconception and prejudice associated with the disease.

**Some common misconceptions are:**

- › HIV is a death sentence
- › Most people with HIV are immoral or irresponsible
- › HIV/AIDS is a disease of prostitutes, truck drivers, homosexuals and drug users

**The truths are:**

- › Being HIV positive is not a death sentence
- › HIV is treatable
- › HIV affects people from all income-groups, cultures, races, sexual preferences and ages

› HIV is preventable

**4 ways to reduce the stigma around HIV**

01. Get tested and encourage your partners, friends and colleagues to get tested too. Knowing your HIV status gives you the power to control your health.
  - a. If you are HIV negative, use preventative measures to stay that way.
  - b. If you are HIV positive, access treatment and support to help you live a long and healthy life.
02. Educate those around you about the disease. Understanding more about how HIV is spread, what it does to the body, and how it can be treated, can all contribute to fighting stigma and improving support for individuals who are HIV positive.
03. Speak to the younger generation about self-care, risky behaviour and the need for protection to prevent STIs, HIV and unwanted pregnancies.
04. Create an open, supportive and positive culture in your home, your community and your workplace. Helping those around you to understand the disease better can reduce the ignorance which leads to the gossip, rejection and social isolation that can come with being HIV positive.



**Let your actions count**

This World Aids Day and beyond, help to create the visibility and openness about HIV that is necessary to mobilise government, communities and individuals to respond to the epidemic.