

HIV, Stereotypes, and Mental Health



What is HIV?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is an incurable virus that is primarily transmitted through various body fluids. It attacks a human's immune system which causes the body not to be able to fight simple pathogens over time as AIDS (Autoimmune deficiency syndrome) develops. AIDS can be prevented through drug therapy.



What stereotypes are related to HIV?

Statically, HIV is higher in gay men (as they accounted for 70% of all new cases in 2021 [CDC, 2021]). Due to many old reporting and statistics like the previous one, many believe that HIV only affects gay men. This is false as HIV affects all genders and sexual orientations. Other false stereotypes include HIV+ individuals all being young, disease ridden, and promiscuous.



How do Stigmas affect people with HIV?

In the UK alone, 74% of people with HIV have gone through stigmatization/discrimination for HIV (Terrence Higgins Trust, 2022). This discrimination is found in healthcare, relationships, and sexual encounters. The knowledge that treatment lets people live healthy lives while not being contagious can help stop discrimination.

How does HIV affect one's mental health?

The stigma associated with HIV, the high costs of treatment, the lack of ability to cure the disease, and the negative stereotypes all lead people with HIV to have an increased risk of mental health issues. Proper protection or abstinence can help prevent HIV and seeking professional health can help support one's mental health.

