

Discrimination in healthcare settings such as verbal harassment, suboptimal care, or delayed care is commonly reported by those living with HIV. This type of behavior contributes to the stigmatization of HIV and can look like:

- Judgmental/insensitive sexual history
- Lack of non-discrimination policies
- Lack of information, support, resources, or counseling provided
- Segregation of HIV patients
- Visible nervousness/fear of transmission

Patient experiences of stigma relating to HIV prevention and/or treatment can result in:

- Fear of receiving medical care
- Self-stigmatization/shame, which can lead to not disclosing HIV status to sexual partners or not getting tested
- Denial of HIV status
- Avoiding appointments
- Not taking medication as prescribed
- Turning to risk behaviors to cope with stigma, such as substance use

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Reducing HIV Stigma in Healthcare Settings 2023



By addressing provider stigma and promoting routine testing, we can increase the accessibility of HIV testing and reduce the barriers to HIV prevention and treatment.





Implement Routine HIV Testing

- Routine HIV testing for all patients ages 13 to 64 regardless of risk is a key step in reducing HIV stigma. Integrating routine, opt-out HIV screening as part of every patient's yearly lab test can effectively reduce rates of perceived provider prejudice and is an important strategy in reducing HIV incidence.
- We can provide resources on what to do if a patient receives a positive test result. Reach out via email for more information.

Take Sexual Histories

- We recommend implementing staff training on conducting sexual histories.
- Taking a patient's sexual history not only provides insight for medical providers but can also reduce stigma by normalizing all sexual behaviors and identities.
- When taking a sexual history, it is important to create a safe, non-judgmental environment for patients, not make any assumptions, and ensure confidentiality.

Suggest At-Home Testing Kits

- At-home HIV test kits, such as OraQuick, provide a safe and private option for individuals to receive their HIV test results without being impacted by stigma.
- Explain to patients that kits can be purchased without prescription at pharmacies and other retail establishments. Providers may also offer to have a self-test kit mailed to a patient's home and can provide further education and linkage to care if the test is positive.
- Providers should encourage patients to only use the OraQuick oral fluid in-home HIV testing when other options are not available, due to the lower sensitivity of oral fluid-based testing compared to other screening methods.

A multi-site, randomized, controlled trial that explored perceptions of at-home HIV test kits among men who have sex with men and transgender women cited benefits to the at-home test such as privacy, security, and fear of being chastised by their provider for their sexual behaviors.

Mailed HIV self-test kits can also significantly increase the identification of HIV infections among men who have sex with men.



Provide Supportive Resources

- Direct patients to supportive and helpful resources such as community support programs and social workers.
- Display signage and provide materials in medical spaces that dispel myths about how HIV is and isn't transmitted, outline their routine HIV testing procedures, and encourage patients to feel comfortable inquiring about HIV screening and treatment.
- Display signage and provide materials educating patients that Undetectable = Untransmittable, and informing them that they will be connected to care in the case of a positive result.

Conduct Training for Medical Staff

Training for medical staff focusing on combatting stigma and improving patient-provider relationships has been shown to improve provider perceptions of patients with HIV and their confidence in being able to provide high-quality care.

