



## BHS Medical Department

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# Reducing Stigma

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Stigma is a negative attitude and belief that can lead to labelling, stereotyping and discrimination towards others. Stigma is associated with a lack of knowledge, a need to blame someone, fear and anxiety about disease and death and gossip that spreads rumours and myths. For example, stigma and discrimination can occur when people link a disease, such as COVID-19 with a population, community or nationality.

### The discrimination can take the form of:

- Other people avoiding or rejecting them
- Getting denied healthcare, education
- Verbal abuse
- Physical violence

### Some groups of people who may experience stigma:

- People who tested positive for COVID-19, have recovered from COVID-19 or were released from COVID-19 isolation or quarantine
- Emergency responders or healthcare providers
- Other frontline workers, such as clerks, delivery drivers
- People who have disabilities or developmental or behavioural disorders who may have difficulty following recommendations
- People who have underlying health conditions that cause a cough

### Stigma hurts everyone by:

- Creating more fear or anger towards ordinary people instead of focusing on the disease that is causing the problem.
- Making people more likely to hide symptoms or illness, keeping them from seeking health care immediately and preventing individuals from adopting healthy behaviours.
- Making it more difficult to control the spread of an outbreak.
- Negatively affecting the emotional, mental, and physical health of stigmatized people. Stigmatized individuals may experience isolation, depression, anxiety or public embarrassment.

### Stopping stigma is important to enabling a safer and healthier environment and community.

#### Everyone can help stop stigma related to any disease by:

- Knowing the facts and sharing them with others in their communities.
- Maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of those seeking healthcare and those who may be part of any contact investigation.
- Correcting negative language that can cause stigma by sharing accurate information.
- Speaking out against negative behaviours and statements, including those on social media.
- Making sure that images used in communications show diverse communities and do not reinforce stereotypes.
- Using social media to speak out against stereotyping groups of people who experience stigma.
- Thanking healthcare workers, and others working on the front lines.