

## Covid 19 Stigma – what is it and how can we reduce it?

**Blaming and shaming certain groups of people for a pandemic poses a threat to everyone. Here's some advice on what you can do to reduce stigma.**

When an infectious disease outbreak becomes a pandemic — as with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) — people are understandably frightened and concerned.

When the outbreak is caused by a new virus, rumors and misinformation run rampant. Stereotypes quickly arise about people who have or may have the disease. For example, certain groups of people may be treated with suspicion and blamed for COVID-19, even though they're no more likely to spread the virus than anyone else. Also, some people worry that individuals who have recently completed quarantine have COVID-19 and are contagious, but there is no current evidence to suggest that's the case.



Blaming and shaming groups in this way can be hurtful and dangerous. It makes people targets for misplaced anger and hostility. It also creates hardships and divisions that hamper the response to the pandemic. Find out how to identify COVID-19 stigma and how to respond to it.



### What groups have experienced stigma related to COVID-19?

- People with the disease and their family and friends
- People released from quarantine
- People returning from travel
- Health care workers and emergency responders
- People of Asian descent

### What happens to groups that are stigmatized?

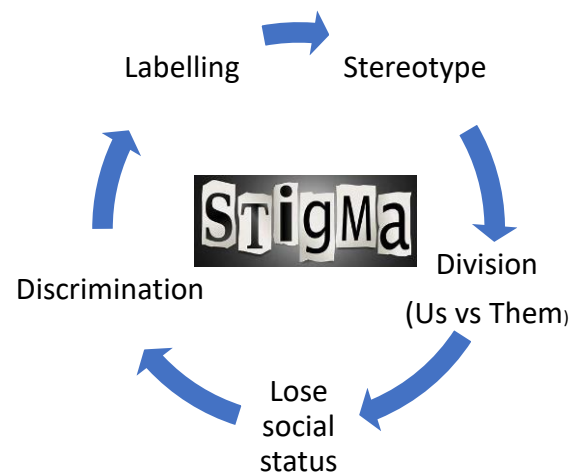
- They may be excluded or shunned in social situations
- They may be targets of verbal, emotional and physical abuse
- They may be denied job and educational opportunities
- They may be denied access to adequate housing and health care

# A short guide to helping deal with covid19 related stigma

## How stigma affects groups that experience it

Stigma can make people feel isolated and even abandoned. They may feel depressed, hurt and angry when friends and others in their community avoid them for fear of getting COVID-19.

Perhaps more concerning, stigma harms people's health and well-being in many ways. Stigmatized groups may often be deprived of the resources they need to care for themselves and their families during a pandemic.



## Why stigma hurts everyone

Research from past epidemics has shown that stigma undermines efforts to test for and treat disease. People who are worried about being shunned or worse may be less likely to get tested or seek medical care, which increases infection risks for them and for others.

Education is one way to fight stigma. It helps dispel harmful stereotypes. You can help reduce stigma by:

- **Getting the facts about COVID-19 from reputable sources such as NHS Scotland. Share them with your family and friends.**
- **Speaking up if you hear or see inaccurate statements about COVID-19 and certain people or groups.**
- **Reaching out to people who may feel stigmatized. Ask how you can help. Listen to them and show that you understand and support them.**
- **Showing support for health care workers and others who are caring for people with COVID-19. Thank them for their work and share positive messages on social media.**
- **Showing support for and thanking all who continue their essential jobs to help you and your community, such as police officers, bus drivers, grocery store clerks, food bank workers and delivery people.**

*Remember, everyone is in this together.*

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coronavirus-stigma/art-20484278>

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## **Further links:**

- More information on rights based education - <https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/>
- More information on bullying - <https://respectme.org.uk/>
- More information on covid 19 –  
<https://www.scot.nhs.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/>  
<https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/councilwide-coronavirus-covid-19-updates.aspx>
- More information on LGBTQ - <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>