

HIV discrimination in the health sector

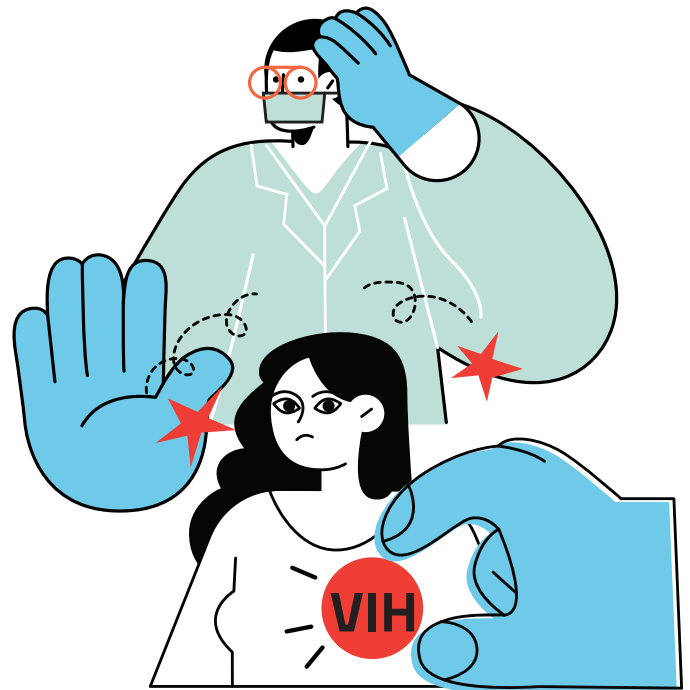
Health is one of the sectors with the highest levels of discrimination against people with HIV.

Several official reports have analysed this issue. Their main conclusions are:

- HIV-related **stigma and discrimination** in healthcare are in themselves **breaches of human rights** and can have a negative impact on the health, well-being, and quality of life of people with HIV.
- **Stigma and discrimination jeopardise efforts to prevent HIV, as they dissuade people with HIV** from seeking care.
- **People with HIV still face many obstacles in a field where discrimination** should not occur, given the training of the people who work in this field.

Day-to-day stigma and discrimination can take several forms:

1. When health workers use condemnatory or **reproachful language** in reference to people with HIV who require care.
2. When health workers **do not seek the informed consent of the person with HIV** to give him or her an HIV test.
3. When health workers take **unnecessary precautions** (such as making the person with HIV wait excessively; double gloving; wearing masks; using signs or specific markings on medical documentation to indicate the person's HIV status).

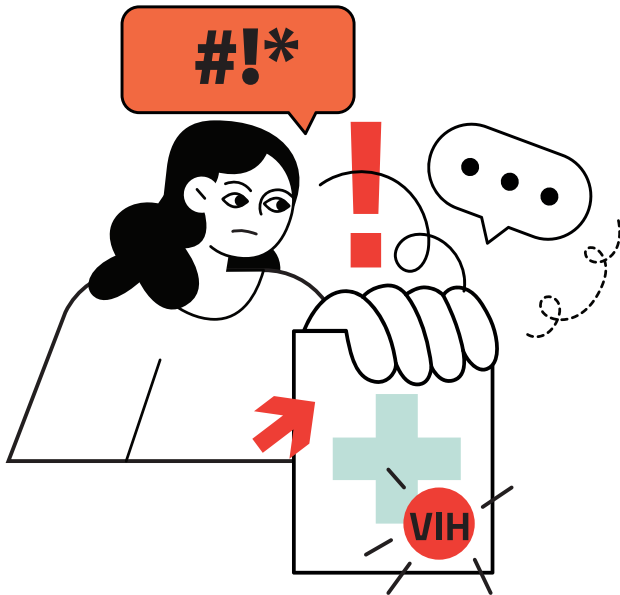


4. When health workers violate the **right to privacy and breach confidentiality rules** (e.g., by whispering or revealing a person's HIV status to family members or companions without his or her permission).

5. When health professionals **refuse to provide health services**, without good cause, to people with HIV.

For migrants, especially those with an irregular administrative status, all these situations are exacerbated by the fear of deportation or by possible negative impact on their immigration application process, based on the false belief that the health centre or hospital staff can pass this information on to the police.

If there are language or cultural barriers, the situation can be further complicated. It is therefore **important for health professionals to keep their medical knowledge about HIV** up to date and, wherever possible, to receive human rights training so they can prevent behaviour that stigmatises and situations that discriminate people with HIV.



What to do when experiencing HIV discrimination in a healthcare environment

- **This situation must be brought to the attention of the centre immediately.** This should be done by filing a complaint or a claim with the Patient Care Service.
- If the centre does not reply, a corresponding **complaint may be lodged with the Autonomous Community Department of Health.**
- A complaint may also be lodged with **the Ombudsman, if deemed appropriate.**
- Legal services should be sought when **the situation is particularly serious.**

Remember:

If you are a migrant and do not speak Spanish, it is essential to ask for the services of cultural mediators or interpreters as soon as you need them. These are already available in many health centres and hospitals.

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La información contenida en esta ficha no pretende sustituir la recibida por el médico. Las decisiones referentes a la salud siempre deberían tomarse tras consultar con los profesionales sanitarios. La información médica puede quedar desactualizada con rapidez.

Si te surge alguna pregunta tras leer esta ficha, te aconsejamos hablar con tu médico o enfermera o llamar a gTt-VIH, al 93 458 26 41, para comprobar si existe alguna novedad relevante al respecto.

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