

Double stigma: living with HIV and AOD use

For many people living with HIV, the experience of stigma doesn't come from just one direction, it comes from two. Being open about HIV can already feel risky. Adding alcohol or other drug use into that conversation can feel impossible.

This "double stigma" has real consequences. When people fear judgement, they stay silent. And when they stay silent, they miss out on the information, support, and care they deserve. This fear of judgement can lead people to avoid services altogether, or to engage only minimally, sharing as little as possible to stay safe.

The impact of this silence is significant. Without honest conversations, people living with HIV may struggle to access accurate information about how substances interact with their treatment and may miss out on support that could genuinely improve their quality of life and health outcomes.

Double stigma is not just a personal burden; it is a barrier to care. Addressing it requires creating spaces where people feel safe, believed, and met without judgement.

If you are living with HIV and are navigating AOD use, and you are worried about seeking support because of stigma, please know that you don't have to face this alone. QPP is here to help. You can self-refer to our services confidentially and at any time – get in touch at www.qpp.org.au/self-referral.



Queensland Positive People

PALS is an initiative of QPP, funded by the Queensland Mental Health Commission



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