

## Navigating unwanted disclosure: when alcohol and other drugs play a role

Disclosing your HIV status is always a personal decision, one that belongs entirely to you. But sometimes, in social settings where alcohol or other drugs are involved, that boundary can blur. You might share more than you intended or find yourself in a conversation that goes in a direction you didn't plan for.

This is more common than people think, and it does not make you careless or irresponsible. It makes you human.

### A moment to reflect

If you have ever experienced accidental disclosure, or want to feel more prepared, these questions might help you explore your own feelings and plan:

- After an unplanned disclosure, what feelings came up for you? What do those feelings tell you about what you need?
- What immediate steps could you take to look after yourself if this happened?
- Are there harm reduction strategies you could put in place before being in situations where you might use substances socially?

There are no right or wrong answers — these questions are simply an invitation to know yourself better and feel more prepared.

### How to respond if it happens

- Reach out to a trusted friend, peer navigator, or counsellor, don't isolate
- Be gentle with yourself; accidental disclosure happens and it is survivable
- Talk it through with someone safe rather than carrying it alone

### How to reduce the risk in the future

- Set personal boundaries before going into social situations where you'll be using
- Choose trusted spaces and people where you feel safe
- Agree with close friends beforehand about what is and isn't okay to share on your behalf
- Consider reducing use in high-anxiety or unfamiliar settings where boundaries can feel harder to hold

Remember: You never have to disclose your HIV status to anyone. Disclosure is your right, your choice, and your timeline — always.

For more guidance, check out the HIV Disclosure Guide by HALC at [www.qpp.org.au/resources/hiv-disclosure-guide/](http://www.qpp.org.au/resources/hiv-disclosure-guide/)

