

MPOX

Stigma & Discrimination

According to the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#), serious concerns have been raised about stigma and discrimination experienced by members of the 2SLGBTQ (Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community related to the current MPOX (formerly known as monkeypox) outbreak. There have also been negative associations between the virus and people from certain countries or races.

Impacts of Stigma & Discrimination:

Stigma* and discrimination** make it more difficult to stop the spread of MPOX, and harms the people and communities that experience it. For example, due to stigma and discrimination people may:

- Delay or avoid medical care and testing if they have symptoms.
- Hesitate to get vaccinated.
- Feel uncomfortable sharing information that can help with contact tracing.
- Believe that they cannot get the virus because they are not part of a certain group.
- Struggle with stress, worry and social isolation, which can lead to both mental and physical health issues.
- Experience unfair treatment and violence.

Preventing Stigma & Discrimination:

1) Know the facts

- Stay up-to-date on MPOX using trusted information sources, such as the Toronto Public Health [website](#).
- Base key messages about MPOX on the latest information.
- Avoid sharing or repeating unconfirmed information and myths. Doing so can actually reinforce inaccurate messages.



MPOX

Stigma & Discrimination

2) Use respectful language

- Use “MPOX” when talking or writing about the virus. The former name (“monkeypox”) has racist and discriminatory connotations.
- Use people-first language. Talk about “people who have MPOX,” not “MPOX cases” or “victims.”
- Avoid language that blames people who have MPOX or specific communities.
- Emphasise that anyone can get MPOX. Although gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men have been most impacted at this time, there is nothing about the virus that specifically targets people of certain sexual orientations, genders, and races.
- Instead of fear-based messaging, focus on [prevention measures](#) including hand washing and vaccination.

3) Speak up

- Challenge stigma and discrimination any time it occurs.
- Remember that silence or doing nothing keeps stigma and discrimination alive in our communities.

4) Offer support

- Help people who are struggling with stigma and discrimination due to MPOX. Call 211 or visit 211toronto.ca to be connected to mental health and other social services.
- If someone is experiencing discrimination in services, housing, or employment, tell them about filing an application with the [Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario](#).

* **Stigma** is when someone sees a person or group in a negative way. It is based on negative beliefs, including prejudice and stereotypes.

** **Discrimination** is when someone treats others in a negative way because of things like race, sexuality, gender and health conditions.