


Protect your baby from HIV and AIDS



 **Act Now!**



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HIV AND AIDS

About 24,000 babies in Zambia get HIV from their mothers every year. This is about 30%-40% of babies born to HIV-positive women. You cannot know which baby will get HIV and which one will not, so protect your baby from HIV.

What is HIV?

HIV stands for human-immuno deficiency virus. This is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). The virus enters the body through contact with blood or body fluids of a person infected with HIV. Most people get HIV through having sex with a person who has HIV.

Is HIV the same as AIDS?

No. HIV is not AIDS. You may live with HIV in your body for many years without knowing it and without getting sick. But a person who has sex with a person with HIV may get HIV even if the infected person does not look sick. If a woman with HIV gets pregnant, her baby may get HIV from her.

Effects of HIV

HIV makes the body's immunity weak and difficult for the body to defend itself against diseases. When the immunity of the body is weak, the infected person develops AIDS and gets sick more often.

How HIV is passed from Mother to child

HIV passes from an infected mother to her baby through the following ways:



1. During pregnancy



2. During labour and delivery



3. During breastfeeding

Out of 100 babies born to HIV-positive mothers:

- About 63 may not be infected with HIV at all.
- About 7 may be infected with HIV during pregnancy.
- About 15 may be infected with HIV during labour and delivery.
- About 15 may be infected with HIV through breastfeeding if the baby breastfeeds for 2 years.

HIV infection during pregnancy



HIV passes from an HIV-positive mother to her baby more often if the mother:

- Has full-blown AIDS
- Has a high viral load (a lot of HIV in her body)
- Gets new or more HIV when she is pregnant
- Has many sex partners
- Eats a poor diet, which can weaken her immunity
- Has an untreated sexually transmitted infection (STI).

HIV infection during labour and delivery



More babies get HIV from mothers with HIV during labour and delivery because of the small cuts and wounds which occur on the mother and baby as the baby comes through the birth canal. More cuts occur when:

- Labour is delayed or takes a long time.
- There have been many examinations of the vagina.
- A mother delivers under the care of a person who is not trained.

HIV infection during breastfeeding



Breastmilk is the best food made especially for the baby. But some babies born to HIV-positive mothers can get HIV through breastmilk. Chances of an HIV-positive mother passing on HIV to her baby increase:

- If the mother puts the baby on the breast in a bad way. This may cause cracked nipples, bleeding nipples and pus in the breast. These breast problems may break the skin and make it easier for HIV to pass from the mother to the baby.
- If the baby breastfeeds and eats other foods at the same time. Other foods damage the inside of the baby's intestines and make it easier for HIV to get into the baby's blood.

PROTECTING YOUR BABY FROM GETTING HIV FROM THE MOTHER

To protect your baby from HIV during pregnancy:



Go for counselling and HIV testing to know whether you have HIV or not.

Ask your partner to go for counselling and HIV testing also.



Stick to one sex partner.

Use condoms every time you have sex.



Start going to the clinic as soon as you know that you are pregnant.



- Protect yourself from malaria by sleeping under a mosquito net treated with insecticides. Insecticides kill mosquitoes which come in contact with the net. Take malaria tablets according to the advice of a health worker. Malaria can weaken body immunity, whether a person is HIV-positive or HIV-negative.
- Make early plans to deliver at a health centre, under the care of trained health workers.
- Keep aside money for transport to the health centre.



- Join a group which can give you support and help you to protect your baby from HIV.

To protect your baby from HIV during labour and delivery:



- Always deliver under the care of a trained health worker.
- Avoid early pushing. Early pushing can cause the bag of waters to break early and cause cuts in the birth canal and on the baby.
- Get a trained birth attendant or family member to support you during labour and delivery if you deliver at home. The person supporting you should wipe the baby quickly.
- Take antiretroviral medicine if you are HIV-positive. This medicine slows the development of HIV in the body. Take the medicine according to the advice of a health worker. The medicine reduces the chances of a baby getting HIV from the mother during labour and delivery.



To protect your baby from HIV during breastfeeding:

HIV-negative mothers and mothers who do not know if they have HIV

- For the first 6 months, give your baby breast milk only. During this period, do not give the baby any other food, not even water. Breastfeeding and giving the baby other foods at the same time damages the inside of the baby's young intestines.



- At 6 months, give the baby other foods in addition to breast milk. Breastfeed the baby first and then give other foods.
- Continue breastfeeding until the baby is 2 or more years old.

HIV-positive mothers



- If you choose to breastfeed, give your baby breast milk only for the first 6 months. During this time, do not give the baby any other food, not even water. Breastfeeding and giving the baby other foods at the same time damages the inside of the baby's young intestines. This makes it easier for HIV to get into the baby's blood.
- If you choose not to breastfeed your baby,
 - Make sure that you can give your baby the food you choose all the time until your baby is 6 months old.
 - Make sure that you can prepare the food using clean water and in clean pots, plates, and cups. Food with dirt in it can make the baby sick or kill the baby.

Whether you are HIV-negative or HIV-positive, during pregnancy and breastfeeding:

- Use condoms all the time to avoid getting HIV.
- Even if you are HIV-positive, use condoms to avoid getting re-infected with HIV.
- Eat different foods available at home to make your body's immunity strong.
- Breastfeed often to produce more milk.
- Go for treatment immediately if you have a sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- Join a support group to share experiences and learn from each other.