

**Young and Planning
for your future?
Avoid HIV infection**



HIV and AIDS

HIV and AIDS are the greatest challenges facing the world today. They shorten life; spoil plans; destroy families and kill adults, young people and babies.

What is HIV?

HIV stands for human immuno-deficiency virus. This is the virus that causes AIDS.

What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for acquired immune deficiency syndrome. When a person begins to get sick because his or her body's immunity has been weakened by HIV, the person is said to have developed AIDS.

Is HIV the same as AIDS?

No. HIV is not AIDS. A person may live with HIV in the body for 15 or more years without knowing it, and without feeling ill. During this period, the person may infect the people he or she has sex with. A baby born to an HIV positive mother may be infected with HIV during pregnancy, labour and delivery or breastfeeding, even if the mother shows no sign of sickness.

How does one get HIV?

HIV enters the body through contact with blood or body fluids of an infected person. Most people get HIV infection from semen and vaginal fluids during sexual intercourse with an infected person. Common ways of getting HIV include the following:



1. Unprotected sexual intercourse without using a condom.

2. Receiving blood which has HIV.



3. Skin piercing instruments which have HIV on them.



4. From an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, labour and delivery, and breastfeeding.

Effect of HIV

HIV attacks and weakens the body's immunity, leaving the body unable to defend itself, and open to diseases.

How serious is the mother-to-child transmission of HIV in Zambia?

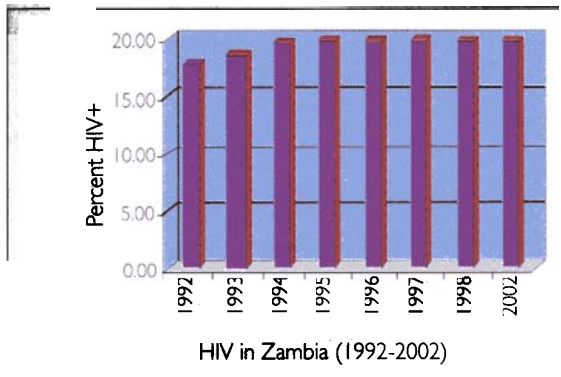
30%-40% of babies born to HIV-positive mothers get HIV during pregnancy, labour and delivery, and breastfeeding. In Zambia, 24,000 babies get infected with HIV every year.

Out of 100 babies born to HIV-positive mothers:

- About 63 may not be infected with HIV.
- About 7 may be infected during pregnancy.
- About 15 may be infected during labour and delivery.
- About 15 may be infected through breastfeeding, if the babies breastfeed for 2 years.

How serious is the HIV and AIDS problem in Zambia?

The first case of HIV infection was reported in Zambia in 1984. Since then, HIV has continued to spread in the country, and today Zambia is among the countries hardest hit by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. About 15.6% of Zambians aged 15-49 years are infected with HIV. The rural areas have a lower infection rate (10.8%) than urban areas (23.1%). The infection rate is highest among young people aged 30-34 years (25.1%).



Why are so many young people infected with HIV?

- Many people get HIV through unprotected sex. They engage in unprotected sex because:
- Friends around them are doing the same.
 - They believe that they cannot get HIV from other young, healthy looking people.

Other factors which increase the spread of HIV among young Zambians include the following:

Beliefs and behaviours which increase HIV infection among young Zambians

| Factors in the community | Personal factors |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some values and practices promote risk behaviours, such as, sexual cleansing of widows. People are reluctant to discuss HIV and AIDS openly. The way men and women relate makes it difficult for women to say no to sexual advances. Rumours, and untrue beliefs also promote risk behaviours. For example people wrongly believe that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no AIDS. People get thin and die because of witchcraft Traditional healers can cure AIDS Circumcised people cannot get AIDS. Sex with a virgin cures AIDS Poverty and economic hardships lead to practices such as sex for money or gifts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many people think that they cannot get HIV. They believe that HIV will infect the other person, not them. People engage in unprotected sex. People wrongly believe the following, which help to promote the spread of HIV: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A healthy looking, beautiful or handsome person cannot be HIV positive. A regular girlfriend/boyfriend or spouse cannot infect one with HIV. You cannot enjoy sex while wearing a condom. Only older people and foreigners are HIV positive. You cannot be infected with HIV during the first sexual encounter. People know facts about HIV and AIDS but do not take action to protect themselves from HIV infection. People fail to seek early treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) |

What can young people do to protect themselves from HIV?

1. Focus on your future

If you want to achieve your future goals, protect yourself from HIV.

- a) Avoid sex before marriage



- b) Be faithful to only one uninfected partner who is also faithful to you.



c) Use a condom every time you have sex.

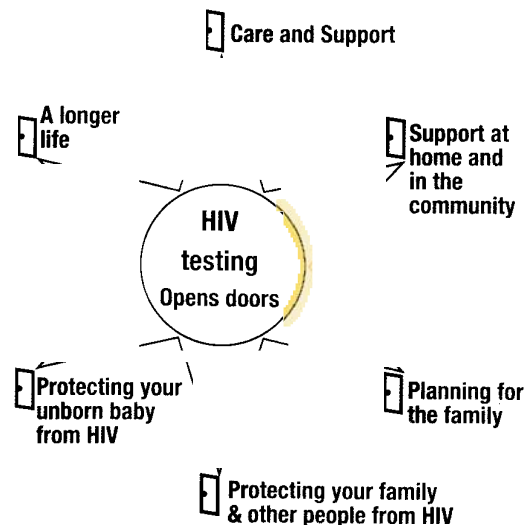
2. Learn facts about HIV and AIDS

You need to know that:

- HIV is the virus which causes AIDS.
- AIDS has no cure and eventually kills.
- But if you know early that you have HIV and live positively, you can live a long time with HIV without getting sick.
- Even after you begin developing AIDS-related illnesses, you can still have a long life if you live positively (see 5 below).

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

Counselling and HIV testing open doors to the following:



- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to care and support.** Going for counselling and HIV testing gives you the information you need to get care and support.

- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to support at home and in the community.** After you know that you are HIV-positive or HIV-negative, your family can support you. Health workers and counsellors can tell you the groups you can join for company and support.

- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to protecting your unborn baby from HIV infection.** Women need to know whether they have HIV or not before they decide to have or not to have a baby. The information will help health workers to give them the advice they need to protect the baby from HIV infection.

- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to protecting your family and other people from HIV infection.** Knowing whether you have HIV or not helps you to discuss HIV and AIDS with family members and find ways of protecting each other from HIV.

- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to planning for the future of your family.** Knowing whether you have HIV or not reminds and gives you time to plan for your family.

- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to a longer life.** More than 80% of Zambians are HIV-negative. And when they take an HIV test, they are relieved to know that they do not have HIV. If you test HIV-positive, you can live positively and live a longer life.

4. Say “no” to risk behaviours

Young people are under pressure to do what their friends and other young people are doing. To protect yourself, develop a strong will and say “no” to harmful behaviours.

- Say “no” to early sex. Wait until you get married.
- Say “no” to sex partners who have not taken an HIV test.
- Say “no” to sex without a condom.

5. If you test HIV-positive, live positively and have a longer life

1. Accept your situation positively.
2. Tell your sex partner and family members that you have HIV and discuss how family members can support you.
3. Ask your partner to go for counselling and HIV testing.
4. Avoid sex or use a condom every time you have sex.
5. Eat different kinds of food found at home to improve your health.
6. Continue doing your work and daily activities as usual.
7. Stop or reduce beer drinking and cigarette smoking.
8. Go for treatment as soon as you get sick.
9. Do exercises to keep your body fit.
10. Join a group which can give you support.
11. Find time to rest.