

HIV: Children 3 to 4 Years Old

Here are some common questions from parents and caregivers of children who have HIV.

What does my child need to know about HIV?

- It is normal for children this age to ask questions — it is how they learn about themselves and the world — but they don't need complicated answers. This is a perfect time to begin talking to your child simply and honestly about his health and what happens during clinic visits.
- Build trust with your child by telling him what will happen at visits to the doctor or clinic. For example, if your child will get a shot, tell the truth. Reassure your child that it will only hurt briefly and that you will be there to provide comfort.
- Your child may begin to ask why he needs to go to the doctor or clinic, have procedures done or take medicines. Give brief answers. For example, say, "We're going to the doctor to keep you healthy." Or, "The doctor needs to take your blood so that she can look at it."
- Simple statements usually meet the needs of a curious child. Your child does not need to hear the words "HIV" or "AIDS."
- Help your child prepare for procedures such as "pokes" through play or coloring books that show what will happen. Your nurse or social worker can help make procedures easier for your child.
- If you choose to say "HIV," be aware that your child may repeat what you say and/or tell others. Children at this age are not able to do a good job of keeping information private.

How can I keep my child and others safe from germs?

- Teach your child not to touch other people's blood and not to allow others to touch her blood. Explain: "We don't touch other people's blood and we don't let others touch our blood because there are germs in blood. We don't want to get germs from others or give germs to others." Read our handout on *HIV: Infection Control*.
- Wash your hands often to teach your child the importance of handwashing. Washing hands is the best way to keep you and your child from catching common illnesses (like a cold or the flu).
- Remind your child to cough and sneeze into her elbow, not her hand. Also, remind her not to touch her eyes, nose or mouth with her hands.
- As your child begins to brush her own teeth, teach her to use only her own toothbrush. Sharing toothbrushes passes germs from one person to another.



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What about medicines?

- Your child's doctor may give medicines to help keep your child well.
- Be consistent. Give the medicine at the right time of day and in the correct amount.
- Your child may not like the taste of the medicine. He may refuse, protest or spit it out.
- Your child needs the medicine so do not give up. Ask your nurse, doctor or pharmacist for hints on how to give the medicine to your child.
- Do not miss doses. Be honest with your doctor when asked if all medicines were taken.
- Tell your doctor or nurse right away if you are unable to get your child to take his medicines.
- Read our handout on *HIV: Making Medicines Easy*.

What about brothers and sisters?

- Talk about HIV in an open, honest and loving way within your family.
- Keeping information private *within* a family can create distrust and anger.
- As children grow older, they are more able to understand and keep some types of information private, if needed.
- Tell each of your children about HIV when they are ready to listen and understand.
- Be aware that if one child knows more than another, there could be some resentment.
- Creating a warm and loving space for your infected child and his siblings allows them to talk about HIV and work through their feelings about the disease and how it affects them and their family.

What about growth and development?

- Some children with HIV have growth or developmental delays. If you, or your doctor, think your child may be behind in thinking, moving, talking or playing, ask to have your child tested.
- Testing can help find your child's strengths and weaknesses. It can also help you find out what changes can be made to help your child.
- If your child is found to have a delay, there are services to help. The sooner your child gets help, the better the outcome for your child.
- If you have any questions or worries, please call Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies at 1-800-322-2588.

Anything else I should know?

- Treat your child the same as you would any other child so that she can lead a full and happy life. Give your child with HIV the very same activities, responsibilities and discipline (nurture and guidance) as you would any other child.
- If you, as the parent or caregiver, are going to stay in the hospital, take steps to help your child feel safe and secure while you are away.
- Choose someone to care for your child whom your child knows well and with whom she feels safe.
- For help with talking to your child about HIV, see our handout on *HIV: Talking to Your Child*.
- If you, your child or someone close to your child is nearing the end stages of life, ask your child's doctor or nurse for more information on how to help you and your child cope with death. Read our handout on *HIV: Helping Children Understand the End of Life*.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Your child's health care provider
- Visit these Web sites:
 - www.kidshealth.org
 - www.pedaids.org
 - www.seattlechildrens.org
- Read our handouts on:
 - *HIV: Children 5 to 7 years old*
 - *HIV: Children 8 to 10 years old*
 - *HIV: Children 11 to 13 years old*
 - *HIV: Teens*
 - *HIV Facts*
 - *HIV: Making Medicines Easy*
 - *HIV: Infection Control*
 - *HIV: Talking to Your Child*
 - *HIV: Helping Children Understand the End of Life*
 - *HIV: Talking to Your Child About Sex*
 - *HIV: Teens and Sex*

Some of the material in this handout was adapted from the following Web sites:

www.4woman.gov/HIV/children.cfm

www.aids.org

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Disclaimer: The inclusion of any Web site link (or resource accessed through a link) does not imply endorsement by Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center. Seek the advice of your child's health care provider before you act or rely upon any information from these resources.

Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Please call Marketing Communications at (206) 987-5205.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's health care provider.