

HIV: Children 5 to 7 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?

- As your child matures, your child may ask new questions about doctor or clinic visits, medicines, or anything else related to his medical care.
- Be truthful when you talk with your child. This creates trust.
- Learning about HIV can be scary and confusing. Your child needs to know that he can look to you for honest answers to his questions, support and guidance.
- Give your child only as much accurate information as he can handle. If you are not sure about an answer, feel free to ask your child's doctor or nurse.
- It is hard for children this age to keep information private. Remember this as you talk with your child about HIV. You may wish to give more information about the disease without using the term HIV if you want to keep information about HIV private from some people.
- You may want to say this to help explain HIV to your child: "You have a problem with your blood. The germ fighters in your blood do not work as well as they should and so you get sick more easily than other children."
- If you wish to use the term HIV, you could say: "HIV is a serious disease that is caused by a tiny germ called a virus. In people who do not

have HIV, their bodies fight off diseases, like a superhero fighting the enemy or bad guys. With HIV, your body can't fight diseases as well, sort of like a tired superhero. You can get sick more easily and it's harder to feel better." Read our handout on *HIV Facts*.



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 to your child: "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 them 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.
- Around this age, some children start taking pills instead of liquid medicine. Your doctor or nurse will help your child learn how to swallow pills.
- Be consistent. Give the medicine at the right time of day and in the correct amount.
- Do not miss doses. Be honest with the 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.

How can I help my child do well in school?

- If you feel your child is having difficulties learning at school, talk to your child's teacher. Ask your child's teacher if he thinks your child should be 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 learn. Keep in mind that you may request testing even if the teacher feels it is not needed.
- All children infected with HIV qualify for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This means that your child can receive services or special help to help her succeed in school. If your child needs further help or special placement, you may request a team evaluation. This is done by school staff in order to start an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Keep in mind that you do not have to tell the school *what* the medical condition is to receive services.

Anything else I should know?

- Treat your child the same as you would any other child so he 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 he feels safe.

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- For help with talking to your child about HIV, read 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*.
- At this age it is normal for children to begin to ask questions about death and dying. Don't be afraid to talk about it. Your child may ask: Am I going to die? Are you going to die? Give your child honest and thoughtful answers.
- At this age, most children can understand more about death. They continue to need reassurance that they did not cause a death by thinking bad thoughts or feeling bad feelings about another person. A child will also need continued explanation that death is final.

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 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.