

# HIV: Children 11 to 13 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?

- This is a good age range for telling your child all about HIV and using the words HIV and AIDS. Children at this age are more capable of keeping information private. They can also understand more detailed information about HIV and AIDS.
- Help your child understand that there are many things about our bodies that are private, such as menstruation and bowel movements. These are topics that we do not talk about with most people. HIV may be this kind of topic. Be clear with your child about whom he can talk with about HIV, and whom he should not talk to at this time.
- If you have not told your child that he is infected with HIV, talk to clinic staff about what approach will work best for your child and read our handout on *HIV: Talking to Your Child*.
- Educate your child about HIV and how he can stay healthy and not spread the disease.
- Because your child is able to understand more and is physically growing and maturing, your child needs to learn the basics of sex education. Your child needs to understand how his body is changing so that he knows what to expect, how to handle the changes and how to ask questions about them.

- Your child is capable of engaging in sexual acts. So, he needs to know about the potential consequences, particularly as a person infected with HIV. Read our handout on *HIV: Talking to Your Child About Sex*.



- At this age, children want to become more independent. Support your child in his quest for independence. Yet, continue to monitor activities.

## How can I help my child stay safe from germs?

- If your child does not already know, teach her about all of the ways in which HIV is transmitted, as well as how HIV is not transmitted. Read our handout on *HIV Facts*.
- Remind your child not to touch other people's blood and not to allow others to touch her blood. Read our handout on *HIV: Infection Control*.
- Remind your child to use only her own toothbrush and razor. Sharing toothbrushes and razors passes germs from one person to another.

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## What about medicines?

- Be consistent. Give the medicine at the correct time of day and in the correct amount.
- If your child is ready, now may be a good time to begin to guide him toward taking more responsibility for his medical care, with a focus on his medicines.
- Your child may be ready to work with you on setting up a system to take his medicines by himself.
- It will still be your job as a parent or caregiver to check to make sure the medicines were taken in the correct amount and at the correct time. Tell your doctor or nurse right away if your child refuses medicines. The clinic staff can help you.
- 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(s). Ask your child's teacher if he thinks your child should be tested.
- Testing can help you 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.
- 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 accommodations needed to help her succeed in school. If your child needs further help or special placement, you may request that a team evaluation be done by the school in order to implement 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 that he can lead a full and happy life. Give your child with HIV the 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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- 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*.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Your child's health care provider
- Visit these Web sites:
  - [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)
  - [www.pedaids.org](http://www.pedaids.org)
  - [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)
- Read our handouts on:
  - *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](http://www.4woman.gov/HIV/children.cfm)

[www.aids.org](http://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.*