

Parenting a child with HIV



Being a parent is a joy, a challenge, an adventure! Being a parent of a child with HIV has special adventures, challenges, and joys. All families have challenges, and it is relationships with others that help us through these things. You are important to us, which is why you are telling you something so important. Please think about what we have said. If you have any questions, please ask and we will be happy to answer your questions and to find any information you may need to know. We appreciate your friendship and involvement in our lives and in our children's lives!

Project HOPEFUL is an organization committed to Helping Orphans and Parents Eliminate Further Unnecessary Losses...of health, dignity, hope, and life.

Project HOPEFUL: Educating, Encouraging, and Enabling families and individuals to advocate for and adopt children with HIV/AIDS

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My child has HIV—what do you need to know?

Basic facts for friends



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What is HIV and how do people get it?

Most people know HIV stands for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is a virus that affects the human immune system, that fights infections in the body. Over time, without treatment, HIV wears down the immune system so people with HIV are vulnerable to infections that others do not get. HIV was discovered in 1982 and much has been learned about it in the last 25 years.

HIV is transmitted in 3 major ways:

- Through sex with a person with HIV
- Through sharing of blood, blood products, or instruments (e.g. needles, medical instruments) that have blood with HIV on them
- From a mother with HIV to her child, during pregnancy, labor and delivery, or breastfeeding

Is there anything special you need to do for my child?

In most cases, no. Please treat my child like any other friend your child might have,. In the unusual event that something happens and she is cut or bleeding, stay calm and cover it with a bandaid, just as you would any cut. All children and adults should know not to touch anyone's blood. You may have noticed that when a child is bleeding, it is almost automatic that kids start screaming for a parent or adult. Simply put any kind of barrier (paper towel, bandage, etc.) between the blood and your skin and wash your hands after helping. Using the same kind of disinfectant wipes you use to clean your house, you can clean up any remaining blood (of course, you should not use these wipes on an exposed cut.)

Is your child at risk from being a friend to my child?

I would never want my child to be a risk to anyone else's child, or to my other children. Fortunately children (and adults) with HIV are not a risk to others under almost ALL circumstances.

HIV is not transmitted through:

- Hugs, kisses, or handshakes
- Drinking or eating after a person with HIV
- Sharing a drinking fountain or toilet
- Air, water or food
- Insects or animals.
- Bodily fluids such as feces, urine, nasal fluid, saliva, sweat, tears, or vomit, unless those fluids have blood in them.



Not one person has contracted HIV from living with a person with HIV in the last 15 years! (CDC documentation)

All information taken from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health & Human Services. (<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/>)

"I thought if I began to minister to people who had it, touching them, loving them, and ministering to them would make me sick, too. Now I know you can't catch HIV that easily. It's not airborne. You can't get it by sitting next to somebody, eating after somebody, hugging, touching, or loving them. It doesn't spread that way.

HIV/AIDS is spread through blood. It's spread through babies born to mothers who are HIV positive. It's spread through HIV positive mothers who breast feed their babies. It is a sexually transmitted disease. It is not spread by you loving and ministering to somebody who is HIV positive." -- Kay Warren, wife of pastor Rick Warren
http://www.hivandthechurch.com/en-US/FastFacts/How_HIV_is_transmitted.htm

Can you have HIV and be healthy?

Children and adults with HIV can be just as healthy as other children if they get proper care and treatment. Some children, even with HIV, have naturally strong immune systems, and may not need to take medicine for many years. Other children with HIV may have a naturally weaker immune system, may have obtained a stronger form of the HIV, or may have had more time exposed to the virus, and thus their immune systems may have trouble fighting infections. These children often benefit from medicines that fight HIV. If a person with HIV takes HIV-fighting medications, it keeps the amount of HIV very low in their blood, allowing the immune system to become strong again. Children often take these medications twice a day, in the morning and at night. Kids with HIV who have access to medications and loving care can live for many years and be very healthy. You may know people with HIV without even knowing it!

Who should I tell?

Even though much has been learned about HIV in the last 25 years, there are still many people who are scared of HIV and people with HIV. It is a big risk I am taking in telling you my child has HIV since people may respond in any number of ways and can tell others who are also not informed about HIV. It can be very lonely and scary to wonder what will happen if people find out your child has HIV. Children with HIV are no risk to others by playing and spending time with them. For this reason, if you wish to tell someone that my child has HIV, please do the courtesy of telling ME so that I can provide them with similar information.. It is tempting to talk with others about various situations, but I ask you not gossip about our family. Please be aware if you are talking about our family and HIV, children may be around who may overhear and repeat things without understanding. Thanks for understanding and being a friend to us.