

**WHAT CAN I DO
IF I THINK MY CHILD
MAY HAVE HIV?**



HOW COULD MY CHILD HAVE HIV?



There is a possibility that children born to HIV positive mothers will also have HIV. They could have contracted HIV:

- o During pregnancy
- o During labor and delivery
- o Through breastfeeding

HIV can also be transmitted to a child:

- o If they are sexually abused
- o If HIV infected blood enters their body from an infected blood transfusion or a contaminated needle and syringe

WHAT CAN I DO IF I THINK MY CHILD MAY HAVE HIV?

If you are worried that your child may have contracted HIV you can take them for an HIV test. Take children aged 6 weeks to 18 months to the referral hospital to be tested, and children older than 18 months to the VCCT (Voluntary and Confidential Counseling and Testing) clinic.

Your child can be tested for HIV from as early as 6 weeks old.



WHAT DO I NEED TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE TAKING MY CHILD FOR AN HIV TEST?



It is up to you to decide whether or not to take your child for an HIV test. Talk it through with the whole family and try to involve your child in the decision-making process as much as possible.



If your child is over 10 years old, they should:

- o Understand what the test means
- o Give their consent before being tested
- o Receive pre-and post test counseling

If your child is younger, give them as much information as they ask for, taking their age into account.

It is possible that you will learn that your child is HIV positive, this can be very hard and it may also mean that you have to reveal and accept your own HIV positive status. At first, your child may suffer from stigma and discrimination, or feel angry, depressed, hopeless or isolated.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF TAKING MY CHILD FOR AN HIV TEST?

You can know for certain your child's HIV status.

If your child is HIV positive:

They can get special medical care and treatment for free, including antiretrovirals (ARVs), the drugs that fight against HIV

They can access free early care and treatment that can help them to live healthily with HIV and reduce illness and hospital visits





You will know why they sometimes get sick and how best to care for them

You can explain to them why they get sick and involve them in their own care



You can plan appropriately for their future



**With the right care, love and support,
HIV positive children can have a bright future and
live happy lives with family and friends.**

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING MY CHILD'S HIV TEST?



1. You register your child with the receptionist at the referral hospital or VCCT clinic.
2. You get given a card with a unique code number on it for your child.
3. You wait while other people are tested until it is your child's turn.
4. The counselor talks to you and your child to identify the risk of HIV transmission, let you know what to expect from the test, and help you to decide if you want to go ahead with the test.
5. The counselor takes some of your child's blood for testing.



o **For children aged 6 weeks to 18 months**, the counselor takes blood by pricking your child's heel.

o **For children older than 18 months**, the counselor draws blood from your child's arm with a needle.

6. The counselor shows you your child's code number on the blood sample so that you do not have to worry that it will get mixed up with other samples.
7. The counselor advises you on when to collect your child's results. For a heel prick test you may have to wait a few days. For a standard test with a needle the results could be ready in as little as one hour.
8. You meet the counselor again to collect your child's results and he/she counsels you, no matter what your child's status is.

WHAT HAPPENS IF... ...MY CHILD TESTS NEGATIVE?

- o Continue to care for your child's general health and well-being.
- o Protect them from HIV.
- o When they are old enough, teach them about HIV and how to protect themselves.



Remember, if you are an HIV positive mother who is still breast-feeding, there is still a possibility that your child could contract HIV after testing negative. Take your child for a second HIV test at the referral hospital 6 weeks after stopping breastfeeding.

WHAT HAPPENS IF... ...MY CHILD TESTS POSITIVE?



- o Listen to what the counselor tells you on next steps.
- o Take your child for an appointment at a health facility where the staff have experience in caring for HIV positive children.
- o Meet up with your local Home-Based Care team who can provide basic care and support, and link you and your family to essential services in the community.
- o Ask the Home-Based Care team for a book called 'Helping My Child Stay Healthy' which explains how to care for HIV positive children and how to involve them in their own care.

**Whether
HIV positive or
negative, all
children need:**

- o Regular health checks and child health services including growth monitoring, deworming, Vitamin A and immunizations from government health facilities
- o Good personal and household hygiene
- o Safe, nutritious food
- o Prompt treatment for illness





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