Living Positively with HIV

Pregnancy and Planning a Family
What is this booklet for?

This booklet gives basic information about planning a family if you are living with HIV and how to avoid getting STIs. It informs HIV-infected mothers on how to eliminate passing HIV to their babies when they are pregnant and after birth.

What is Positive Living and why should I care?

Positive Living means taking care of your health and body when you have HIV. A person with HIV can live a healthy, normal and productive life when they practice Positive Living.

How do I avoid pregnancy and STI?

Unprotected sex spreads STIs. Use condoms every time you have sex to prevent STI's and unplanned pregnancy.

An unplanned pregnancy can put your health at risk. If you do not want a baby, using condoms with another family planning method can help provide dual protection to prevent unplanned pregnancy and STIs.

See a health worker immediately if you think you are pregnant or have a STI.
Why use dual protection?

Dual protection is using a family planning method with condoms to prevent STIs and pregnancy. Family planning methods include short-term methods (pill and injection), long-term methods (IUCD, Implants), and permanent methods (tubal ligation and vasectomy).

USE DUAL PROTECTION TO AVOID UNWANTED PREGNANCY AND STIs. SEE A HEALTH WORKER TO LEARN ABOUT FAMILY PLANNING.

Why is it important to plan a pregnancy?

It is important to think carefully about having a baby before you get pregnant. Having a baby puts a lot of stress on the mother’s body.

An HIV-infected woman can pass HIV to her baby during pregnancy, during delivery, and through breastfeeding. This is called mother to child transmission of HIV (MTCT). There are medicines available to help minimize the risk of you giving HIV to your baby.

You and your partner must take responsibility to minimize the risk that will make your baby acquire HIV. If you are thinking about having a baby it is important for you and your partner to see a health worker to discuss your options.
How can I minimize the risk of transmitting HIV to my baby when I am pregnant?

All HIV-infected pregnant women need to be taking ARVs. Medicine is available free to all pregnant women in Lesotho.

When you discover you are pregnant, go to for antenatal care visits as soon as possible. The health care workers will monitor you and your baby to make sure you are both healthy.

Go to a health facility to deliver. The health workers know how to deliver a baby in a way that lowers the chances of you passing the baby HIV. The baby will need medicine directly after birth.

IF YOU BECOME PREGNANT, YOU NEED TO GO ON ARVS AND GO TO ANTENATAL VISITS.

How can I reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to my baby after birth?

Even after you deliver your baby, you must continue taking ARVs. You will need to take ARVs for the rest of your life. If you forget to take your ARVs, the amount of virus in your body will increase, and you may give it to the baby when you breastfeed.

Your baby will need to take a drug called NVP every day for six weeks after birth. If you forget to give your baby NVP even one day, it will be more likely to get HIV.

Even if you do everything right, your baby may still be at risk of getting HIV. It is important to bring the baby for HIV tests at 6 weeks, 14 weeks and 9 months or if the baby falls ill.

AFTER YOU DELIVER, YOU MUST CONTINUE TO TAKE YOUR ARVS, EXCLUSIVELY BREAST FEED, AND TAKE YOUR BABY FOR REGULAR HIV TESTS.
Glossary of Terms:

**AIDS**: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

**Antenatal care**: health care for pregnant women.

**ARVs (antiretroviral)**: a combination of drugs taken together that slow HIV from reproducing by protecting CD4 cells in the immune system.

**CD4 count**: the test that measures the strength of your immune system. The higher your CD4 count is, the stronger your immune system.

**Dual protection**: using more than one family planning method including condoms to prevent STIs and pregnancy.

**Exclusive breastfeeding**: only feeding breast milk to your baby

**Family planning**: services that help you to space your children (HOW: you choose each method. WHEN and HOW: how many children do you want) and to prevent STIs including HIV.

**HIV**: Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus which causes AIDS.

**NVP (Nevarapine)**: medicine given to babies whose mothers are HIV-infected after birth.

**PMTCT**: Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission of HIV. Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI): an illness that is spread through sex.

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Tips for Positive Living

- Drink safe, clean water
- Eat healthy, balanced diet
- Adhere to medication given to you by a health worker
- Practice safer sex
- Wash hands regularly to prevent diarrhoea
- Get enough rest
- Avoid drugs and alcohol
- Join a support group
- Go for routine checkups and get medical treatment
- Stay active
- Keep your counselling appointments
- Practice safer sex
- Avoid drugs and alcohol

**REMEMBER**: A PERSON WHO IS HIV-INFECTED CAN HAVE A NORMAL, PRODUCTIVE AND HEALTHY LIFE WHEN THEY PRACTICE POSITIVE LIVING.

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Where can I get more information?
All public health facilities and private health facilities.