Protecting yourself from HIV is protecting your unborn child

It is estimated that more than 90% of children living with HIV acquired it during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding – forms of transmission that are preventable. Without intervention, the risk of an HIV-positive mother passing the virus on to her child can be as high as 45%, whereas taking antiretroviral drugs and avoiding breastfeeding decreases the risk of transmission to less than 2%. However, the best way for mothers to prevent transmitting HIV to their children is to protect themselves from getting it in the first place.

“Adopt and sustain appropriate behavior regarding prevention and care for HIV/AIDS affected people, including orphans.”
Situation of the HIV epidemic in Latin America and the Caribbean

Practices

**Within the community:**
- Talk about HIV/AIDS openly and honestly. Encourage dialogue between generations, especially between grandmothers, mothers and daughters.
- Encourage pregnant women to attend antenatal care services.
- Provide access to comprehensive sex education.
- Provide access to technology for the health personnel.
- Provide access to sexual and reproductive health services that are youth-friendly.
- Promote health-seeking behavior by pregnant women.
- Ensure that all health care facilities have voluntary counseling and sexual reproductive health care services all have voluntary counseling and sexual reproductive health services.
- Promote family and community support to pregnant women to ensure that they attend antenatal care services.
- Empower women to negotiate condom use with their partners.
- Encourage women to have skilled attendants on hand during their labors and deliveries.
- Encourage pregnant women to get tested for HIV.
- Ensure antenatal, family planning and sexual reproductive health care services all have voluntary counseling for pregnant women and women of child-bearing age.
- Encourage pregnant women to get tested for HIV.
- Ensure the possibility that HIV testing can be done at all health care facilities.
- Make condoms available and educate on how to use them.
- Provide effective treatments for HIV-infected women. Ensure access to treatment schemes to reduce the likelihood of mother-to-child transmission.
- Provide access to sexual and reproductive health services that are youth-friendly.
- Promote health-seeking behavior by people of child-bearing age, especially women.
- Develop interventions to ensure pernatal and sexual health.
- Ensure births are attended by qualified personnel.
- Provide access to technology for the early diagnosis of HIV in newborns and treatments for those that are infected, including breast milk substitutions when necessary.

**At health care facilities:**
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**In the framework of maternal, newborn and child care:**
- The first step to prevent mother-to-child transmission is knowing if the pregnant mother is infected with the virus. We have a long way to go before 100% of pregnant women in the Region are tested for HIV.
- Only 36% of pregnant women living with HIV in the Region received any type of treatment to prevent the transmission of HIV to their children in 2007.

**In the framework of maternal, newborn and child care:**
- The infection rate of the general population reaches 3% in some areas of the Region. A conservative estimate could put the infection rate among pregnant women at 0.3%; in other words, approximately one in 300 pregnant women is infected with HIV.
- In 2007, 11.3 million children were born in the Region, of which 34,000 are children of mothers living with HIV. Mother-to-child transmission of the virus without any type of intervention can be as high as 45%; in other words, almost half of all children born to mothers living with HIV will become infected with the virus. By taking the appropriate measures, this number can be reduced to 1 in 100.
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