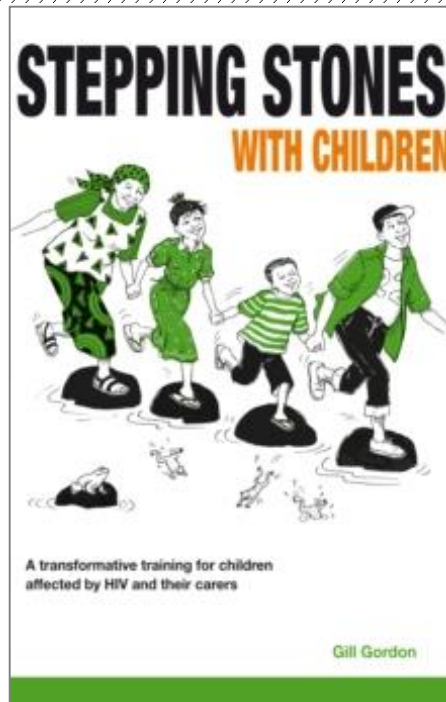


Handouts for *Stepping Stones with Children*



This *Handout for Stepping Stones with Children* is to be used with the *Stepping Stones with Children* training manual published by Practical Action Publishing, 2016.

You can download this handout for free for use with this training manual from the www.stepsstonesfeedback.org website.

On this website there are also many other resources to support you with this training manual and the original *Stepping Stones* training manual.

Stepping Stones and *Stepping Stones Plus* as well as *Stepping Stones with Children* are both programmes created and supported by Salamander Trust, www.salamandertrust.net

Stepping Stones with Children was created by Salamander Trust with PASADA. It was funded by Comic Relief.

© *This Handout: Salamander Trust 2016*



ALL ABOUT HIV

How do children get HIV?

Most children under 14 who have HIV got it from their mothers. HIV was shared with them as they grew during pregnancy, during birth, or through breast-feeding. Their parents did not intend to share HIV with them. They just did not have the knowledge, support, or medicines to stop the HIV being transmitted to their child.

Nowadays, women who have HIV can take medicines called Anti-Retrovirals (ARVs), which mean that, almost always, they can have babies free of HIV. Children who have HIV can also take ARVs when they need them, which means that they can stay well, and have their own babies who don't have HIV.

Most people understand that women want to keep their babies healthy. But some people blame women for sharing HIV with their babies. This is unjust and harmful. There are lots of reasons, to do with stigma and available services and harmful gender norms, why women may not get the medicines they need to protect their children from HIV.

HIV and the immune system

The immune system is the body's natural defence against disease. HIV damages and weakens it. After some time a person with HIV who is not taking ARVs will get sick and need treatment more often than usual.

What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?

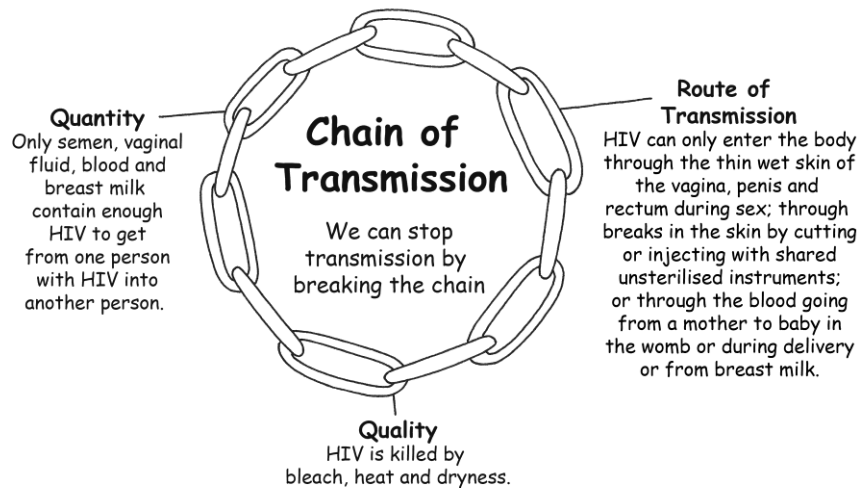
A person living with HIV can feel well and appear healthy for many years. But if they don't take medicines, HIV will gradually damage their body's immune system. Eventually, one or more serious illnesses develop and the person has AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

How does HIV damage the immune system?

When HIV gets into the body it damages cells in the immune system called CD4 cells. HIV gets inside them and multiplies. Each dying CD4 cell releases more HIV into the body. As more CD4 cells die, the body becomes less able to protect itself against germs.

Treating HIV

HIV can be treated. Anti-Retrovirals (ARVs) are drugs that stop HIV cells from multiplying and spreading. They can massively reduce the amount of HIV in the body. This means that the immune system can recover, or stay strong. People with HIV who are able to take ARVs well can live longer and healthier lives. By reducing the load of HIV in the body, ARVs enable mothers with HIV to give birth and breastfeed without sharing HIV with their babies.



Quality of HIV

HIV is not a very strong virus. It can survive for some time in blood outside the body, but there are no reports of people getting HIV from spillage of blood or semen on unbroken skin. HIV can live for one or two weeks in syringes in blood containing HIV. We can kill HIV with fresh, full-strength bleach, and we can wash it away with three washes of water. HIV dies when it is exposed to heat above 60°C; for example, if someone with HIV bleeds into a cooking pot. HIV is killed by saliva, and by the acid in our stomachs.

Quantity of HIV

HIV is found in large enough quantities for it to be shared in blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk. HIV is not found in sweat, or tears, or mosquitoes. It is found in tiny amounts in saliva, vomit, faeces, and urine, but not enough for there to be a risk of transmission, unless blood is present. ARV medication makes it difficult for HIV to multiply. After some time of taking ARVs well, the quantity of HIV in the body fluids becomes too low to be shared with another person.

HIV's routes of transmission

There are four routes:

- 1) Sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal) without using a condom;
- 2) A blood transfusion using untested blood;
- 3) Having an injection, or cutting the skin using the same needle or knife as another person without sterilizing it;
- 4) From a woman to her baby during pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding.

NOTE: HIV cannot be shared through unbroken skin, or even broken skin, very easily because the fluid that HIV is in needs to meet with another person's fluid.

We can use our virtues of love, respect and responsibility towards each other, irrespective of whether we have HIV or not. When we recognise that HIV affects us *all* and is the responsibility of us all, we can keep each other safe, including our babies when we are ready to have them.