

Chapter 1 : What to Tell Your Kids About HIV and AIDS

AIDS-Proofing Your Kids is the first book to explain the most practical and direct strategies for parents and educators to teach children the skills and responsibilities needed to approach sex.

By providing accurate information, you can satisfy their curiosity, reduce their fears, and help them to protect themselves. Teenagers may put themselves at risk - or have friends they are concerned about. And younger children may have heard about it on television or from their friends, and wonder what it means to them. What you should tell them depends on their age and activities, experience and interest. Their outlook will differ, too: It also depends how much they already know. Do they have health or family life classes at school? Human sexuality education should be part of the curriculum from kindergarten to the end of high school. Ask them what is being taught - or ask the school what resources are being used. What should children know at various ages? Here are some suggestions:

At this - or any - age, dispel any myths they may have picked up.

Pre-teens 9 - 12 years With the changes of puberty, pre-teens start becoming more concerned about their bodies and their looks. Parents need to talk to them about sexuality, AIDS and drugs. Give them accurate information, using the correct words for different parts of the body. Tell them what is meant by sexual intercourse, how HIV is spread, how to avoid risky behaviors and why taking drugs is dangerous. Pre-teens are old enough to understand what AIDS stands for: And what it means: It is a serious, incurable disease - but it can be prevented.

Teenagers 13 - 19 years This age group needs far more information, and in far more detail. But they need to know about condoms and birth control, too, and how drugs and alcohol can affect their judgment. Tell them about the high risk of sharing needles for injecting drugs, including steroids, or for ear piercing or tattoos. Make sure they understand that AIDS is not just a disease that affects gay men. It can affect anyone who engages in risky behaviors. For conversation openers, try these: Canadian Public Health Association, Provided by ArmMed Media Revision date: July 5, Last revised:

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HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus; AIDS stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. HIV destroys part of the immune system. Specifically, it affects a type of white blood cell called the T lymphocyte. T cells are one type of "fighter" cell in the blood that help the body fight off all kinds of germs and diseases. After HIV enters the body, it piggybacks onto a T cell and works its way inside of that cell. Once inside, the virus completely takes over the T cell and uses it as a virus-making factory to make a lot of copies of itself. The newly made viruses then leave the T cell and go on to infect and destroy other healthy T cells as they continue to multiply inside the body. T cells invaded by the virus can no longer fight infections properly. Someone who is infected with the virus is called HIV positive. But it may take years for the virus to damage enough T cells for that person to get sick and develop AIDS. Although the HIV-positive person may feel fine, the virus is silently reproducing itself and destroying T cells. However, thanks to new medications, someone infected with HIV can stay relatively healthy and symptom-free for many years. These medications are very expensive and not available to everyone in the world. This is when he or she gets very sick. A doctor diagnoses someone with AIDS when the person has a very low number of T cells or shows signs of a serious infection. Since the discovery of the virus in 1981, millions of people throughout the world have been infected with HIV. Most are adults, but some kids and teens have HIV, too. In the world today, AIDS remains an epidemic. About 3 million of those infected are children. An infected pregnant woman passes it to her unborn child; this can be prevented by treating the mother and child around the time the baby is delivered. A person has a blood transfusion. In fact, infected people often do not experience symptoms for years. Some develop flu-like symptoms a few days to a few weeks after being infected, but these symptoms usually go away after several days. If untreated, an HIV-positive person will eventually begin to feel sick. The person might begin to have swollen lymph nodes, weight loss, fevers that come and go, infections in the mouth, diarrhea, or he or she might feel tired for no reason all of the time. These can be life threatening. For example, people with AIDS often develop pneumonia. Other infections can affect the eyes, the organs of the digestive system, the kidneys, the lungs, and the brain. Some people develop rare kinds of cancers of the skin or immune system. Most of the children who have HIV got it because their mothers were infected and passed the virus to them before they were born. Doctors need to watch them closely. Someone can be infected with HIV without even knowing it. So doctors recommend testing for anyone who might have been exposed to the virus, even if the chance seems very small. People who are HIV positive need to have additional blood tests every so often. The doctor will want to see how many T cells the person has. The lower the T cell count, the weaker the immune system and the greater the risk that the person will get very sick. They take special steps that include wearing gloves, protective clothing, and even goggles for their eyes. Hospitals have strict procedures for handling samples of blood and other body fluids to prevent others from coming in contact with HIV. They can work or go to school, make friends, hang out, and do all of the things other people can do. They will have to take certain medicines every day and see their doctors pretty often, and they may get sick more than other people do because their immune systems are more fragile. Even though they may look OK, people who are HIV positive may sometimes feel scared, angry, unhappy, or depressed. They may feel afraid that the people at work or school, or their friends or family could find out and start treating them differently. Until then, the smartest thing to do is to know the facts and avoid putting yourself at risk.

Note: Citations are based on reference standards. However, formatting rules can vary widely between applications and fields of interest or study. The specific requirements or preferences of your reviewing publisher, classroom teacher, institution or organization should be applied.

Chapter 4 : Home Safety | Safe Kids Worldwide

Get this from a library! AIDS-proofing your kids: a step-by-step guide. [Loren E Acker; Bram C Goldwater; William H Dyson] -- Recommends a system of progressive coaching for parents to teach their teenagers about AIDS, safer sex practices, and abstinence.