

Myths and Facts about HIV/AIDS



a practical guide to prevention, health & life



Global Strategies for HIV Prevention
www.GlobalStrategies.org



www.sahaya.org

Talk about HIV and AIDS.



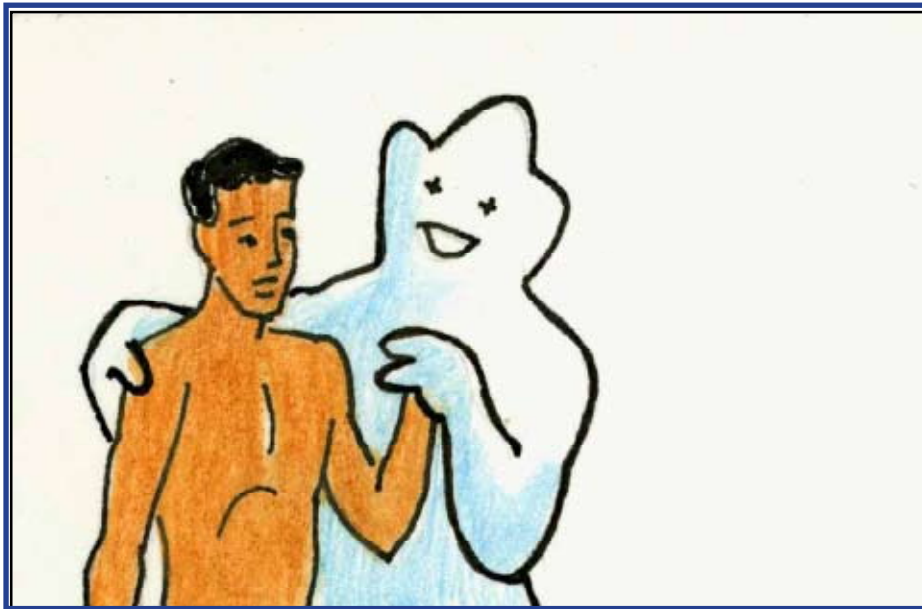
**The more you talk
about HIV and
AIDS...**

**the more you will
understand its nature and
the more you will save
lives**

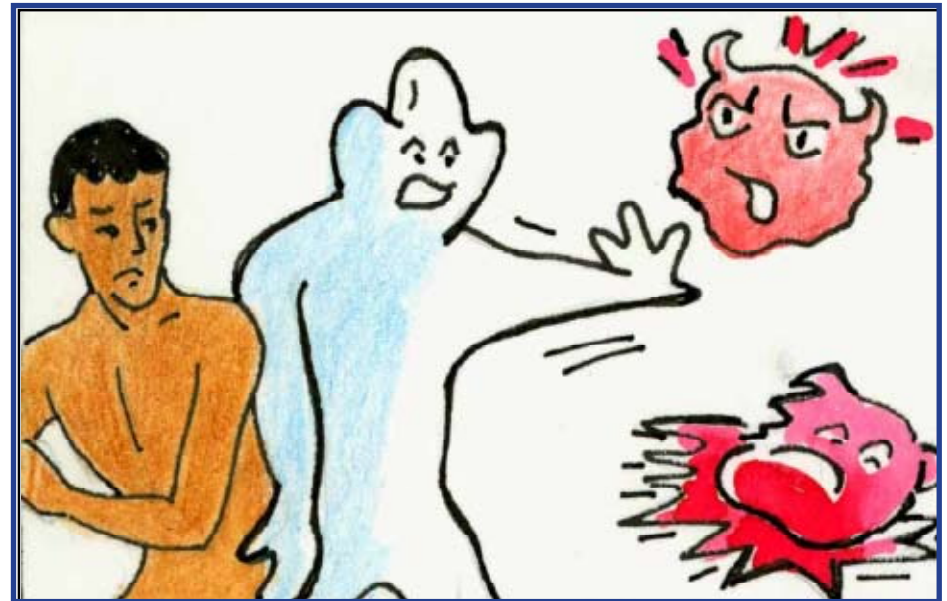
What is HIV?

HIV is a small germ known as a virus. HIV weakens the body and makes it unable to fight sickness.

This is how it does it:

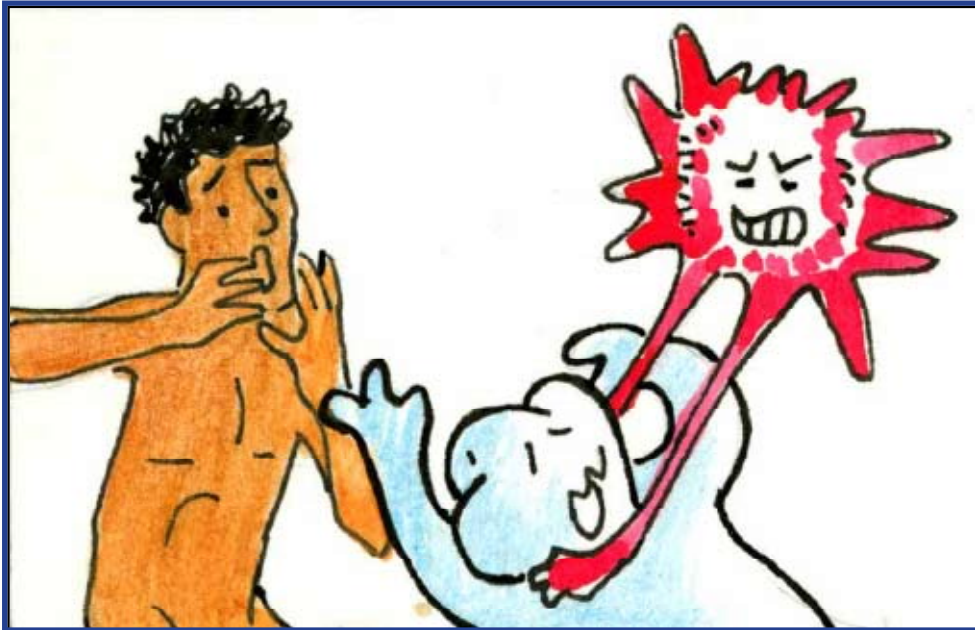


1. Our bodies are normally protected by white blood cells against diseases



2. White blood cells help fight diseases that attach our bodies.

What is HIV?

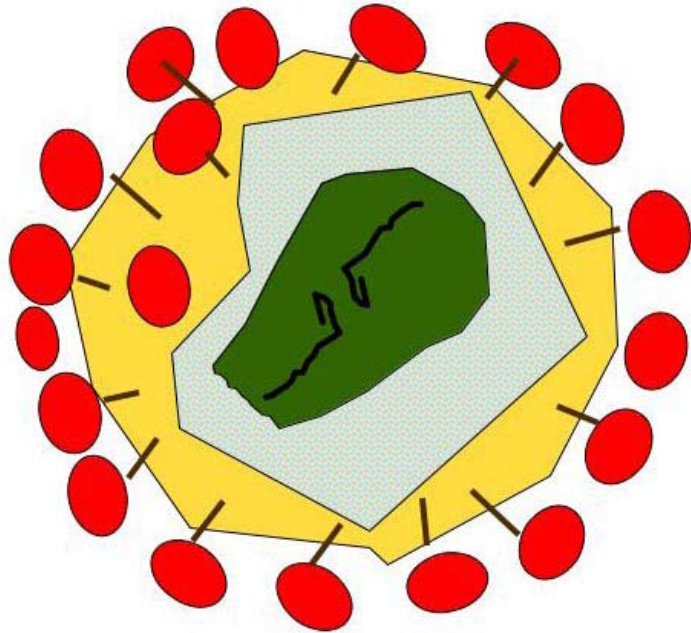


3. However HIV is a stronger germ than the white blood cells, it attacks and weakens the white blood cells.



4. So when our bodies can no longer have white blood cells to protect them, diseases can attack us and eventually kill us.

What does HIV mean?



HIV stands for:

HUMAN: it affects human beings.

IMMUNODEFICIENCY: is a condition in which the immune system, consisting of white blood cells, is not working and the body cannot fight disease germs.

VIRUS: an organism that causes infection.

HIV is the name of the virus. When somebody is HIV-positive, it means the virus is present in his/her body and blood. It does not necessarily mean that the person is ill.

What does AIDS mean?

AIDS stands for:

ACQUIRED: you get it from somebody else.

IMMUNE: it affects the immune system, the white blood cells of our body that fight disease.

DEFICIENCY: the immune system no longer works well.

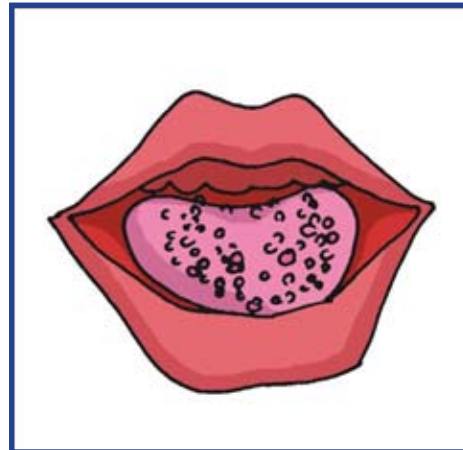
SYNDROME: not just a single illness, but many different symptoms and infections develop because the immune system cannot fight off other diseases.



What is AIDS?

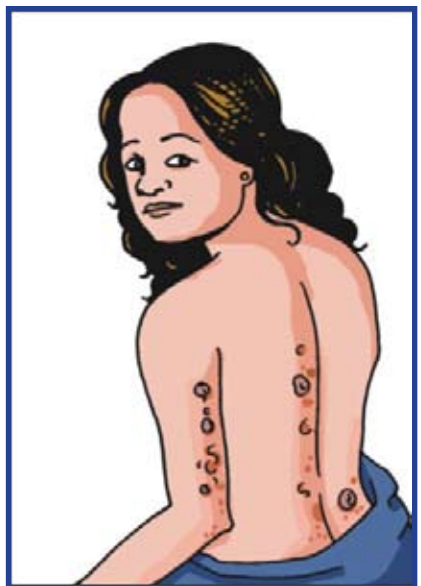
AIDS is a collection of diseases that come once HIV has weakened the body. People with AIDS get sicknesses such as:

Diarrhea



Mouth infections

Skin rash



Fever



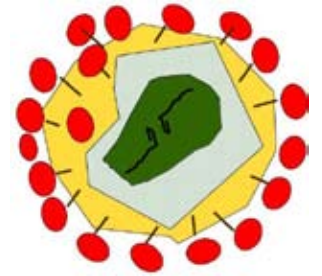
Tuberculosis

They also lose weight and are generally weak.

What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?

HIV: is the name of the virus.

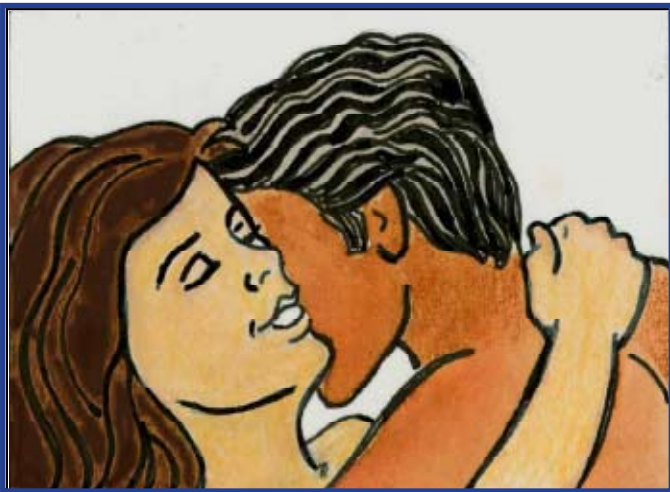
AIDS: is the name of the disease that people infected with HIV develop.



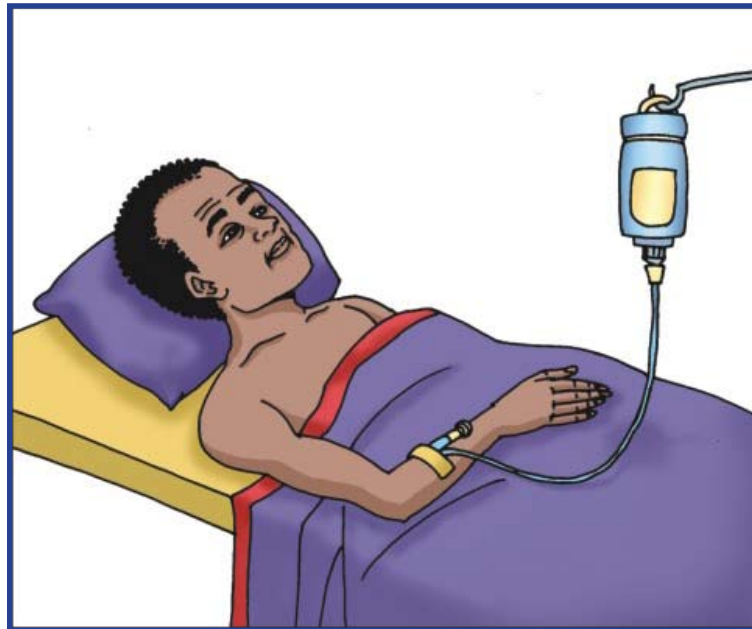
When a person becomes HIV-infected, it takes usually about 5 to 10 years before symptoms of AIDS develop. Babies and children often develop the disease faster. During those first years, an HIV-infected person can look totally healthy, and can still transmit the virus to others!

How HIV is spread:

HIV is found in the blood and in sexual fluids of both men and women. It is spread in three main ways :



1. Sex



2. Blood



3. Mother-to-child

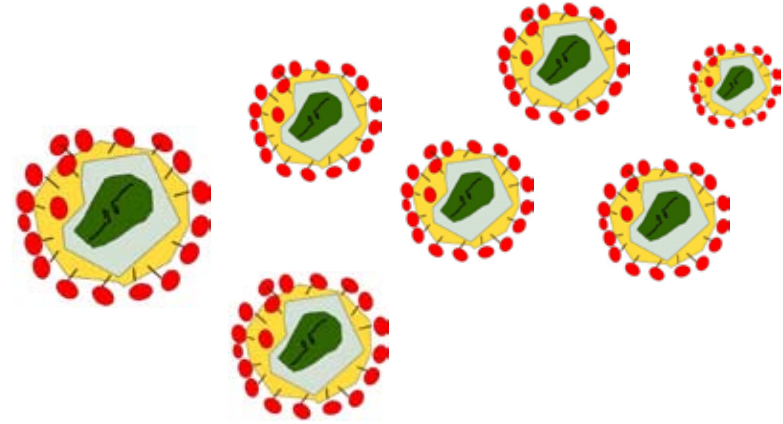
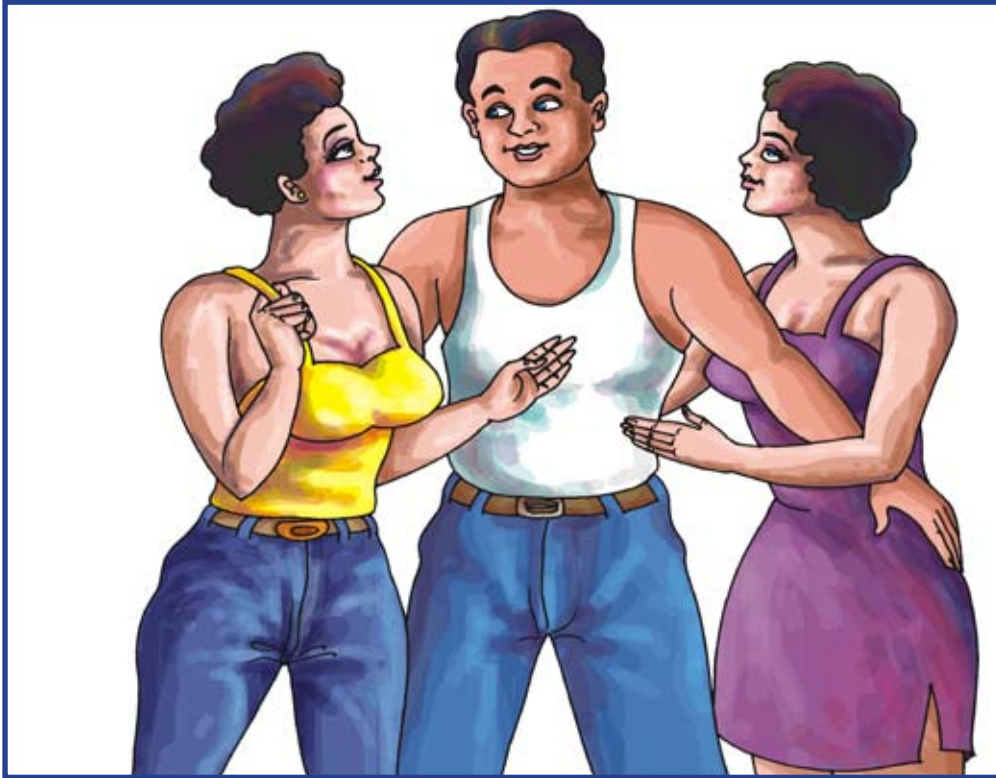
1. HIV transmission through sex



How HIV is spread through sex:

- You can get HIV by having unprotective sex with someone who is already infected with HIV.
- During unprotected sex, HIV can enter the body through the lining of the vagina, penis, mouth or rectum.
- A man can also get HIV from having unprotected sex with another man who is already HIV-infected
- Unprotected sex is any form of penetration (vaginal, anal or oral) without a condom!

Having many sexual partners increases your risk of HIV infection!



2. HIV transmission through blood



- HIV cannot penetrate through intact skin.
- People get HIV when HIV-infected blood mixes with their blood.
- Infected blood can come from blood transfusion. If you need a blood transfusion, then insist on blood which has been tested for HIV.

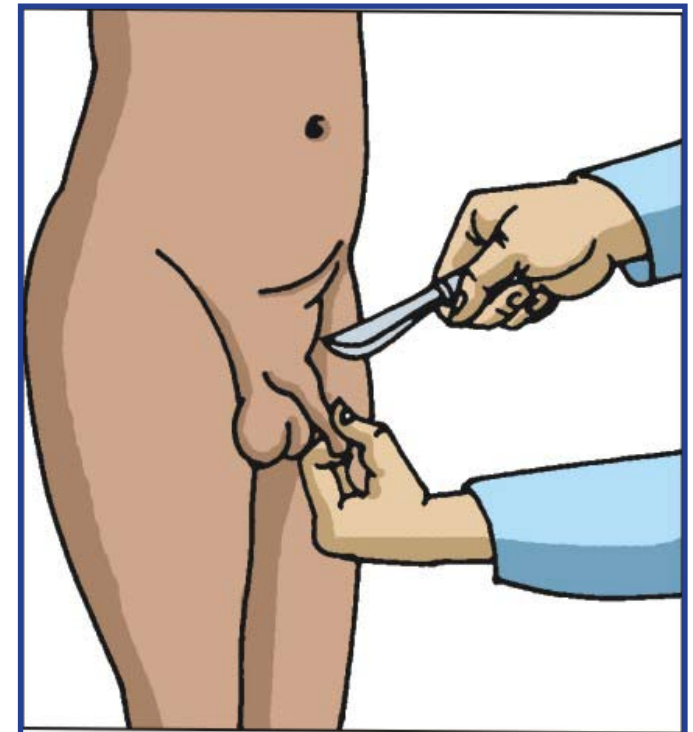
2. HIV transmission through blood



- Infected blood can also come from needles contaminated with HIV-positive blood.
- Therefore, never share needles with anyone!

2. HIV transmission through blood

Traditional customs and HIV:



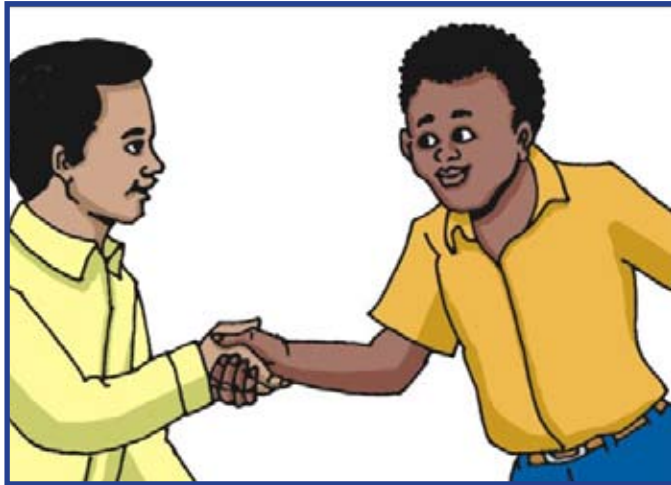
- Shaving, body tattooing, ear and nose piercing, or circumcision with unsterilized blades or knives can spread HIV.
- Modify risky traditional customs to avoid the spread of HIV.
- Use only clean instruments.

3. HIV transmission from mother-to-baby.



- A woman with HIV can pass the virus on to her baby. The baby can become infected while in the mother's womb, when it is being born, or through breastfeeding.
- The baby will NOT get HIV from being hugged by the mother.

HIV does **NOT** spread through:



Shaking hands



Shaking combs



Eating from the same plate



Hugging

...with somebody who is HIV-infected

HIV does **NOT** spread through:



Towels or clothing



Sharing latrines or toilets



Sitting close to HIV+ people



Mosquitoes, other insects or animals

Preventing infection through sex:



You can avoid getting HIV and AIDS from sex by following the **ABC** approach (in order of importance):

1. **A**bstaining from sex
2. **B**eing faithful to a partner who is faithful to you.
3. **C**ondom use

Abstinence

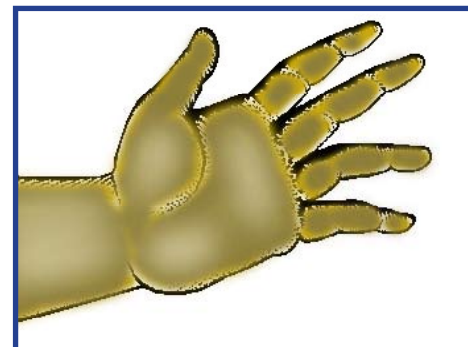
Don't be afraid to say **NO** to sex.



- Do not have sex until you are married.
- You can enjoy your relationship and love in non-sexual ways, which do not spread HIV, such as kissing and hugging.

Abstinence from sex

- “Hey, that’s easier said than done...But how do I deal with my sexual urges?”
- **MASTURBATION:** (self-satisfaction through stimulation of one’s own genitals) is a healthy way to release sexual urges without a partner.
- Although most people won’t admit it, many do it regularly. Contrary to many beliefs, it is safe. It does **NOT** lead to any physical or mental weakness, and does not give disease.



Be faithful to your partner!

- If you can't abstain from sex, then be faithful to one partner, who is not infected and who is also faithful to you!
- Avoid many sexual partners. This will decrease the risk of you catching HIV.

NO !



HIV & Marriage



- Both partners should get an HIV test before marriage.
- Inform your partner of your status, so you can both make informed decisions about whether or not to continue with the marriage.
- If you marry an HIV+ person, then you can still enjoy sex, but always using a condom is a must.

HIV & Marriage

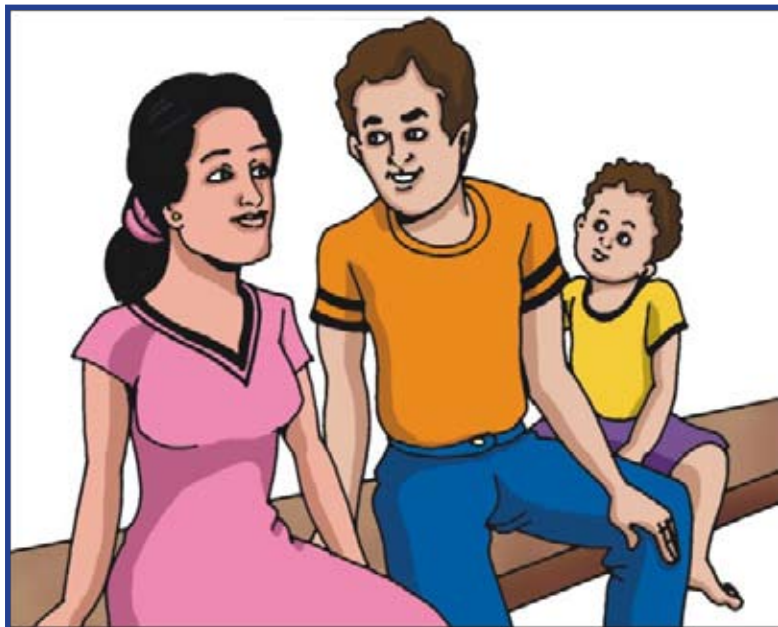


Also after you are married, please be faithful to your partner.



- IF you don't want to abstain, or
- IF you or your partner or not faithful, or
- IF you are not sure if your partner has HIV, then don't take any risks.

Always use a condom

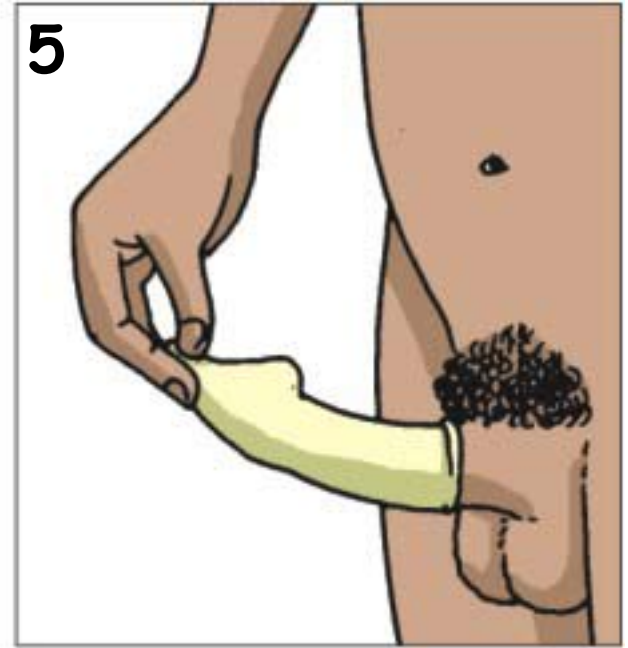
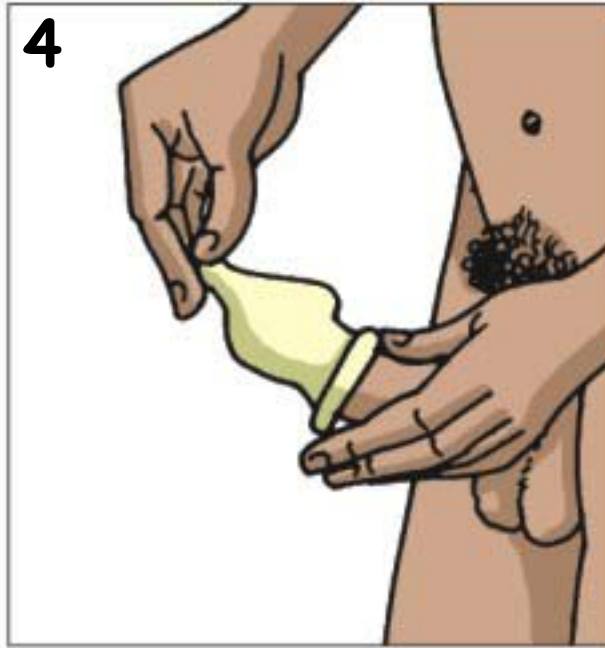
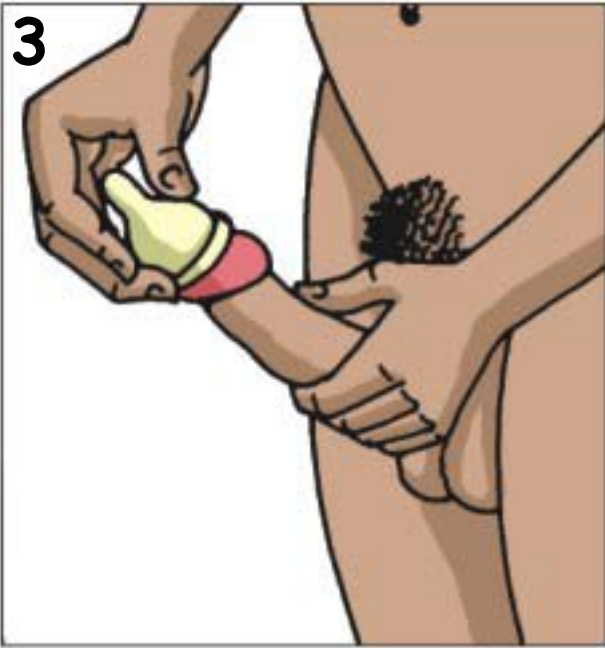


How to use a condom

- You can use a condom to avoid getting infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It is very risky for you to be exposed to other sexually transmitted infections if you already have HIV.
- It is also important that you use the condom correctly.



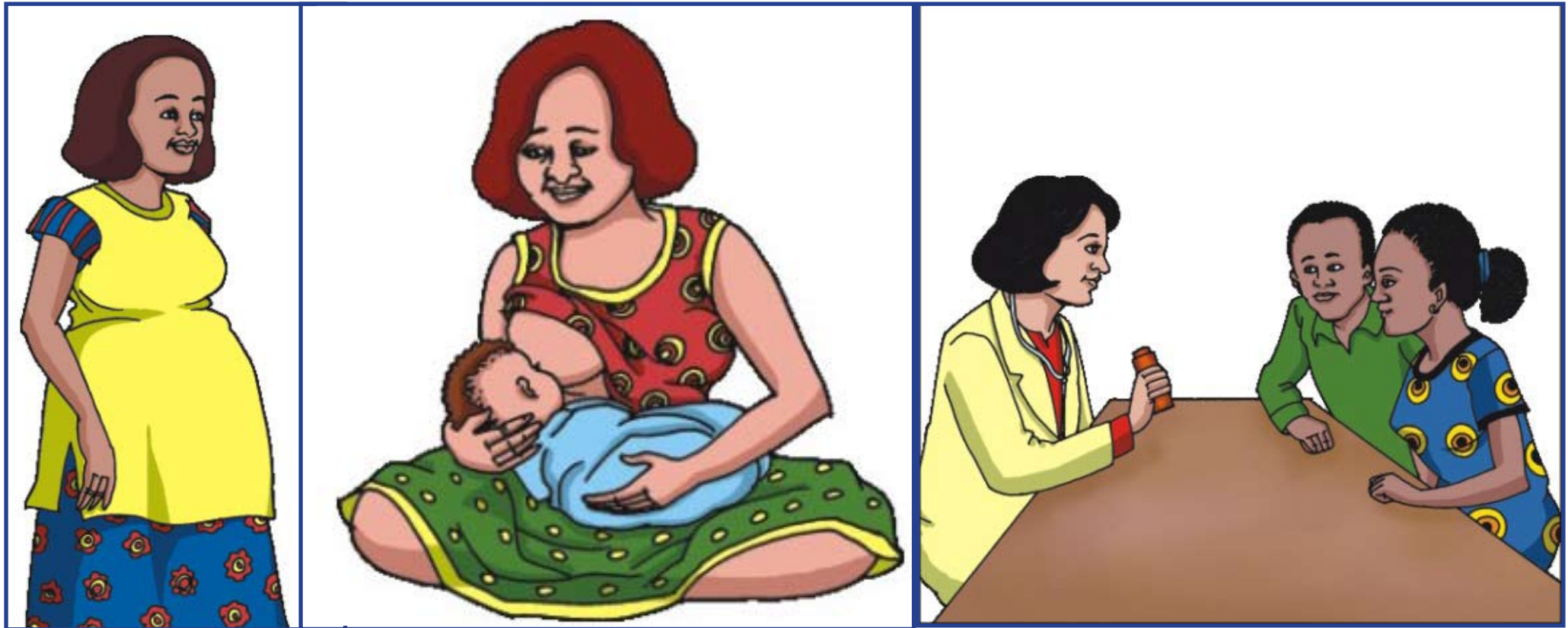
1. Check the expiration date.
2. Open the package carefully without damaging the condom.



3. Put the condom on only after the penis is fully erect
4. Always hold the space at the end of the condom to squeeze out air, and then gently roll it on the penis
5. Check to make sure there is space at the tip and that the condom is not broken.
6. With the condom on, insert the penis for intercourse. The condom must be on during the whole time of penetrative sex. If it slides off or breaks, put on a new condom. If you use lubricant, use only water-based lubricants (not oil-based, which may dissolve the condom).
7. After you have finished, hold onto the condom at the base of the penis. Keeping the condom on, pull the penis out before it gets soft. Remove the condom carefully without spilling the semen.
8. Tie a knot in the used condom and dispose of it in a safe place such as an enclosed trash container or in a pit latrine or toilet Always use the condom only once for every sex act.

HIV transmission from mother-to-baby.

How to prevent HIV infection of your baby.



- A woman with HIV should seek advice before getting pregnant because she may pass the virus to her baby during pregnancy, during childbirth, or during breast-feeding.
- Your counsellor or doctor can tell you about drugs that reduce the chance your baby will become infected with HIV. Adoption is also an alternative to pregnancy.



HIV and breast-feeding

- If you have a baby, your health-care worker can explain you how to minimize the risks of transmission.
- Unless if you have the money and time to use only formula-feeding, exclusive breast-feeding is usually still the best food for the baby. Breast-milk also protects babies against diarrhea and many other diseases.

Can you tell who has HIV or AIDS?



Of course not!
Do not take chances. Always protect yourself.

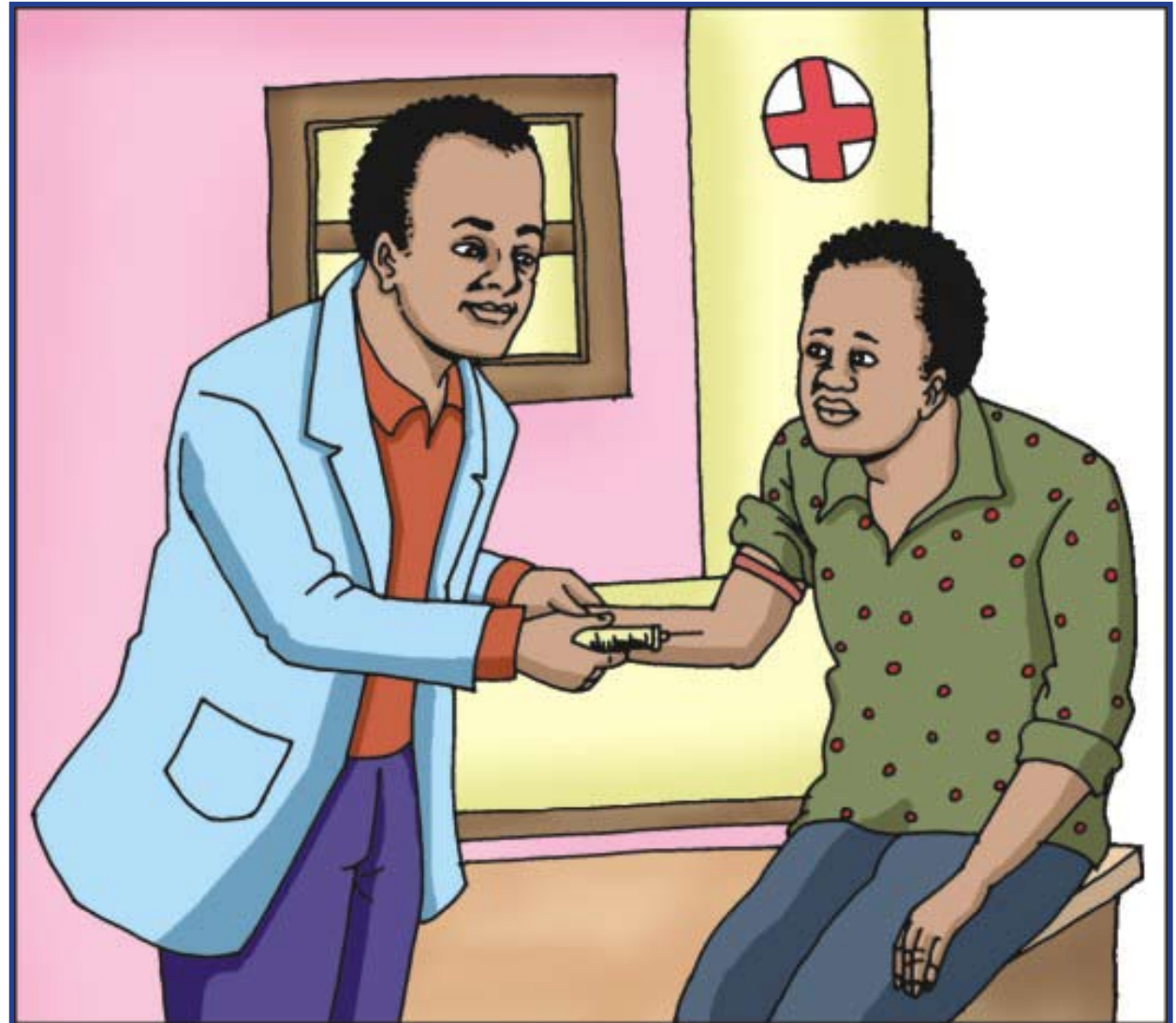
HIV Testing.

Why have an HIV test?

Even if you look healthy, the only way of knowing whether you have HIV or not is to have a special blood test.

You may choose to have your blood tested for HIV:

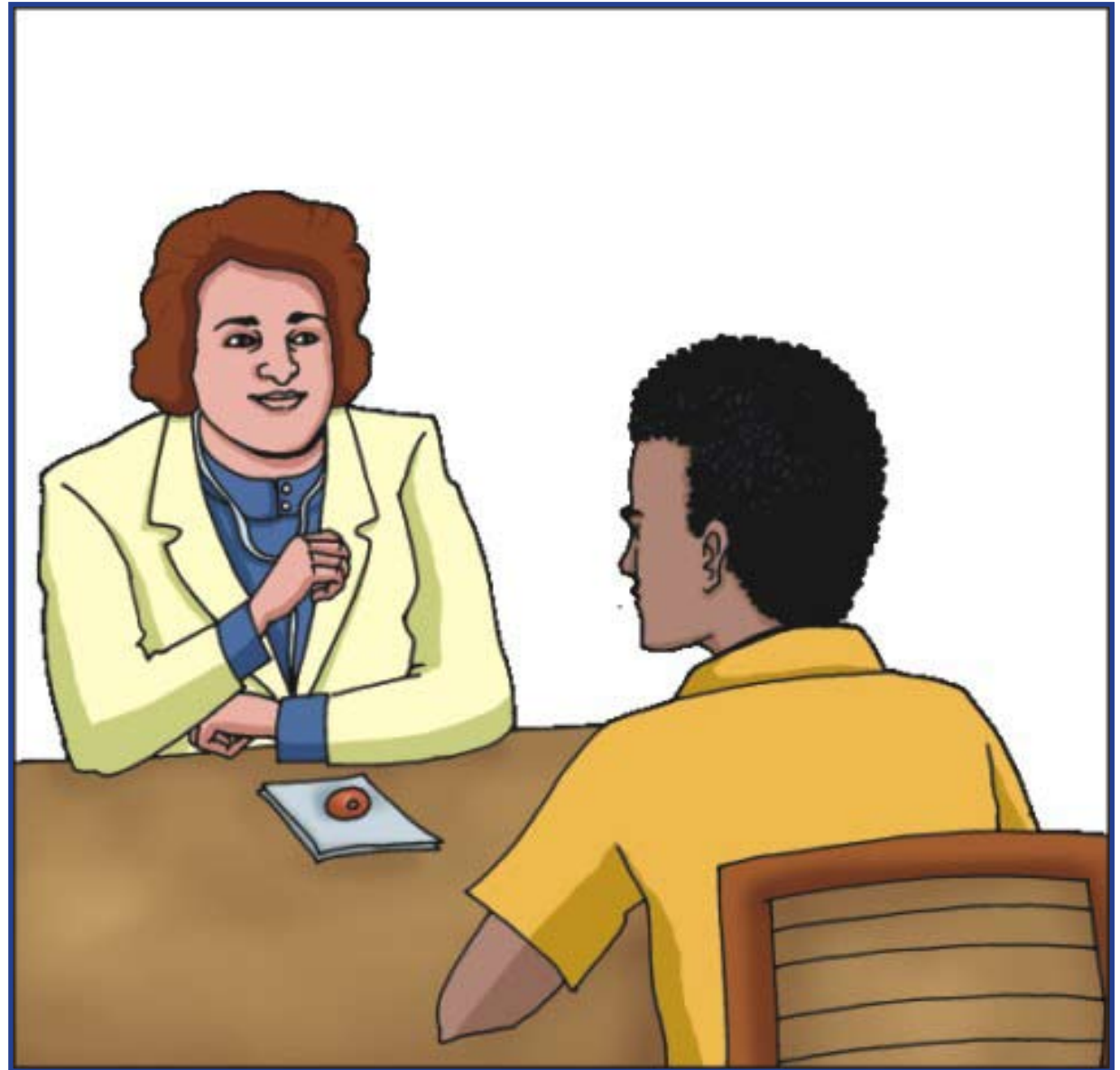
- If you are worried that you may be infected.
- If you are planning to get married.
- If you know your partner is infected.
- Before deciding to have a baby.



HIV Testing.

Testing you for HIV

- Taking an HIV test should be entirely decided by you alone.
- Nobody else has the right to force you to take an HIV test if you are not ready to know the results of the test.
- It is important for a counsellor to talk to you before the test and after the test.
- Talking to you helps you to think about how you will cope with the results of the test.
- The results of the test will remain private and confidential.



HIV prevention is 2 steps.

1. **Knowledge**: know how to protect yourself and others!

2. **Action**: follow the right behavior!

- Don't rely on others to protect you from getting infected with HIV.
- Don't let your peers pressure you to engage in risky activities.
- It's all up to you! Be responsible and be an example to others by making the right decision at the right time!



If somebody you know is HIV infected:



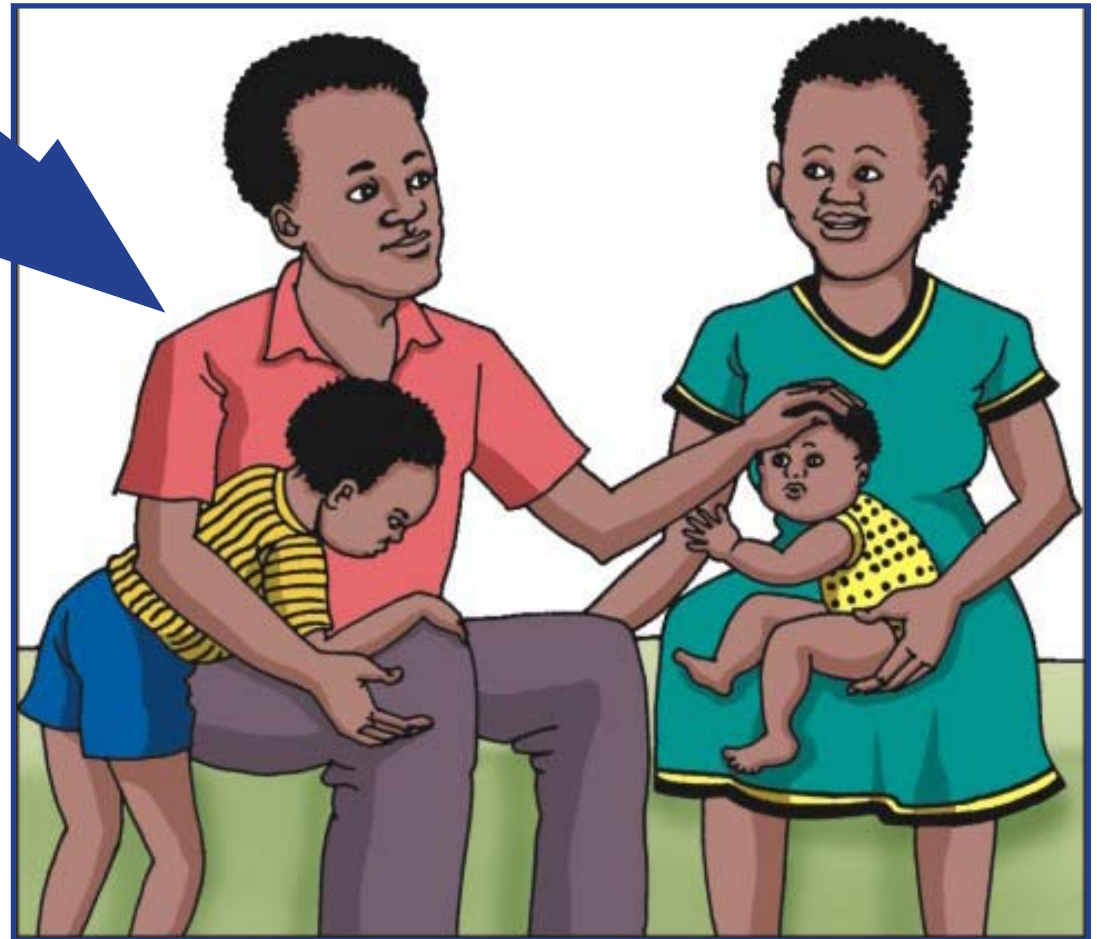
**Do not point
fingers.**

**Anyone can get
HIV.**

Even you!

HIV Testing.

If you test HIV positive... HIV should not divide your family.

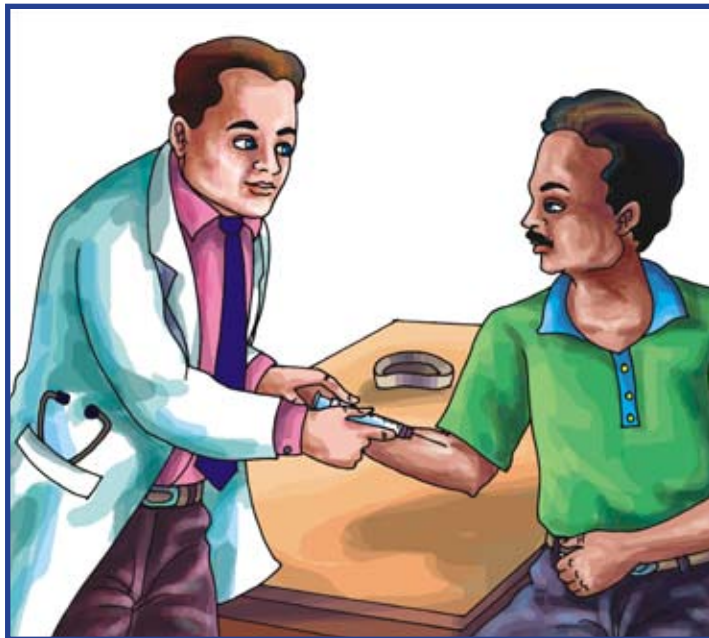


- Do not abandon your wife or husband because of HIV or AIDS.
- Abandoning of the partner will add to the pain and will certainly make the children suffer.
- It is instead more helpful to forgive and stay together. This will enable you to plan for the future of the family.

Positive living.

HIV and AIDS patients can live positively by:

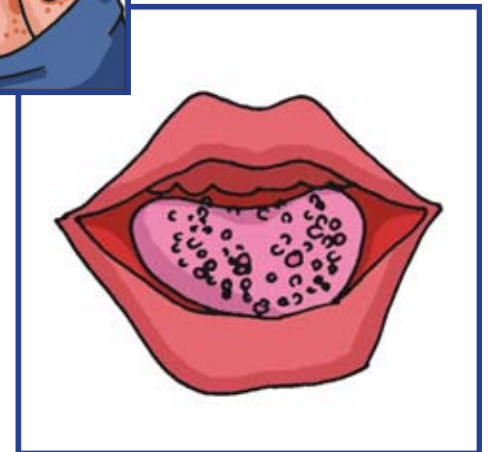
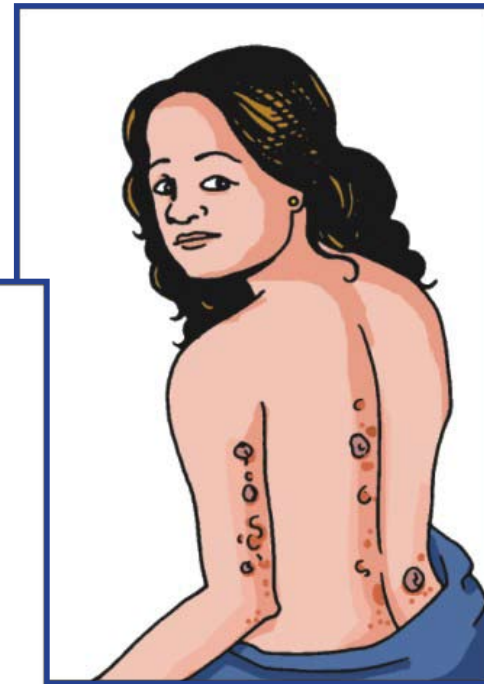
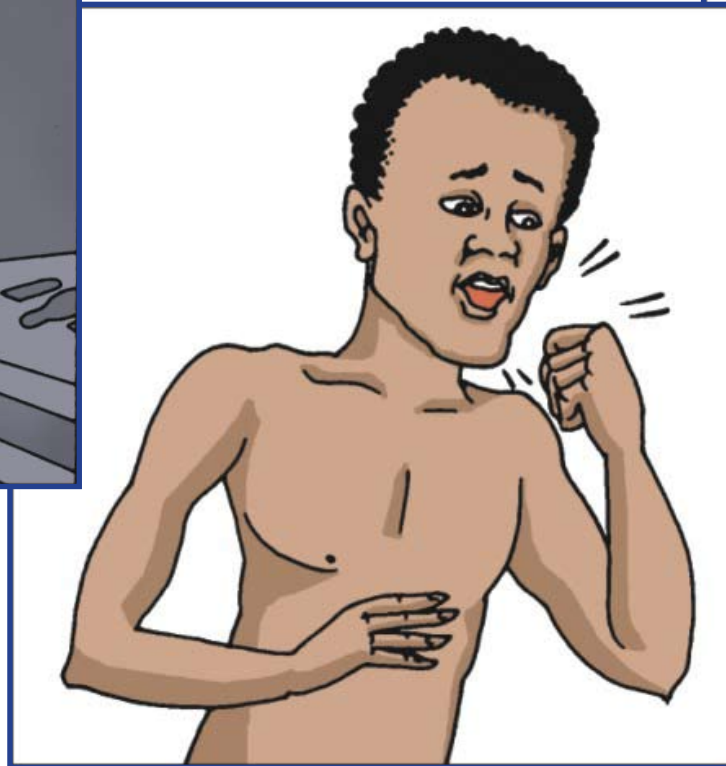
- Always using a condom
- Getting medical help regularly
- Eating nutritious foods
- Looking after their mental and spiritual health



AIDS and Opportunistic Infections

If you develop AIDS, you will get other infections such as

1. Diarrhea from cryptosporidium, bacteria or viruses
2. Respiratory infections such as tuberculosis or pneumonia
3. Skin infections
4. Mouth sores, ulcers and infections



AIDS and Opportunistic Infections

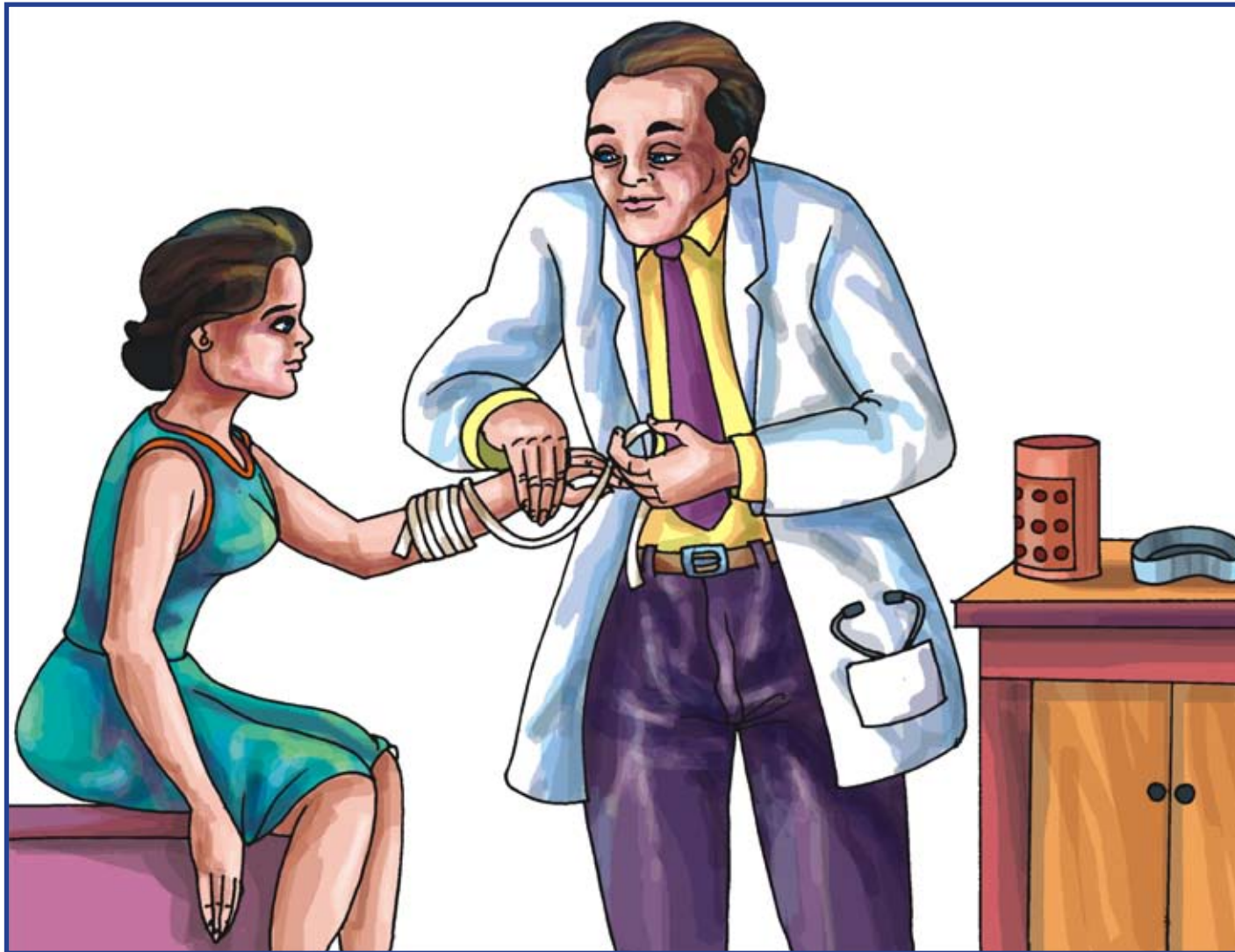
When you develop AIDS, you may experience other symptoms such as:

- Fever
- Without proper treatment, you can also lose weight, become weak and eventually die.
- Therefore it is important to get early treatment as soon as you have any AIDS symptoms.



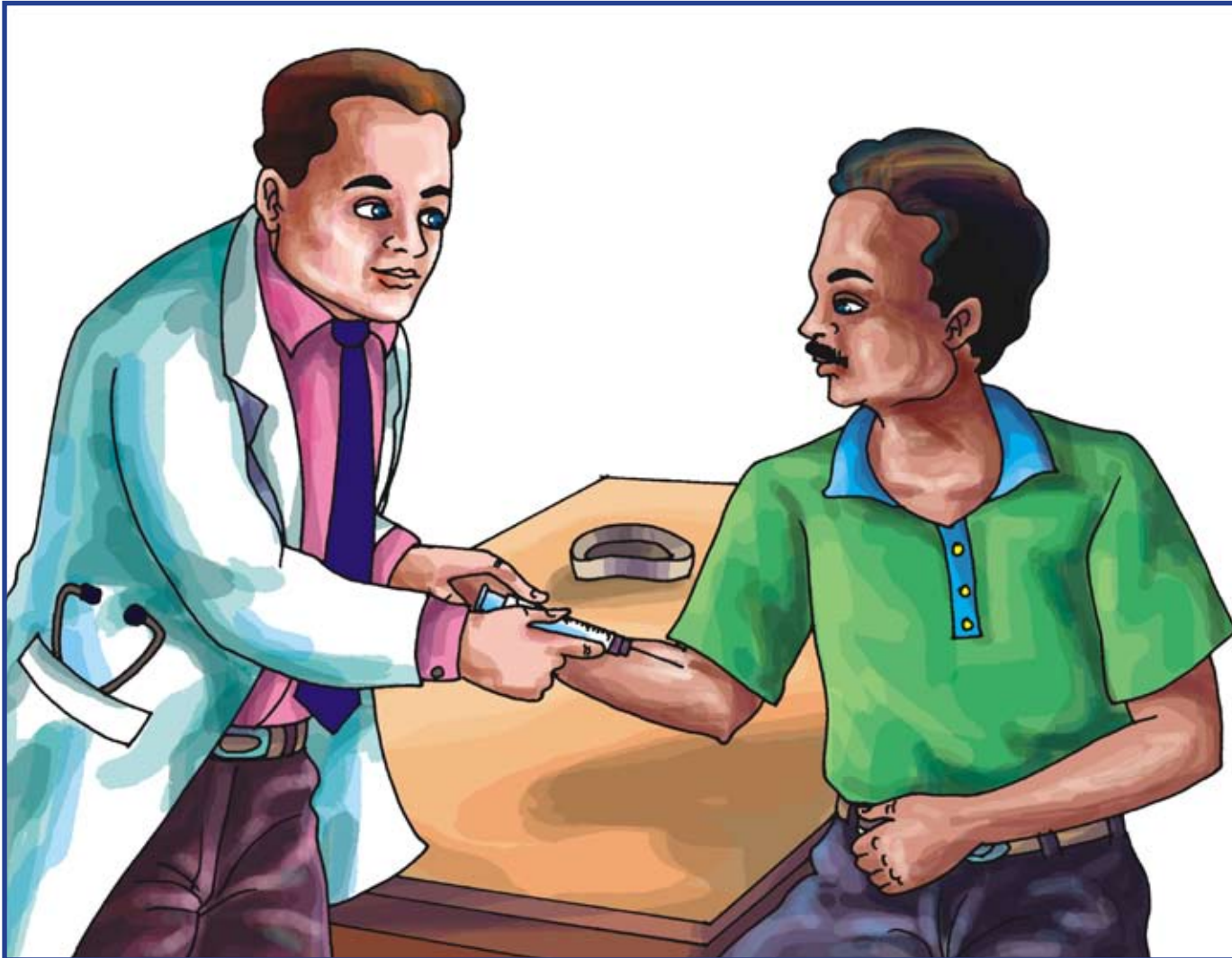
If you're HIV-infected

Seek proper medical care and treatment. The sooner you seek help, the better!



The importance of medical care.

Good medical care and regular check-ups will help to keep your body strong.

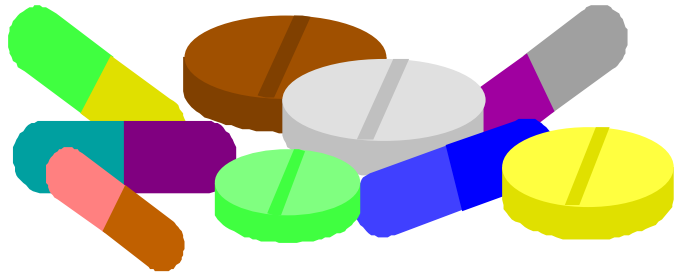


There are false doctors who claim they can completely cure HIV infection. Don't believe them.

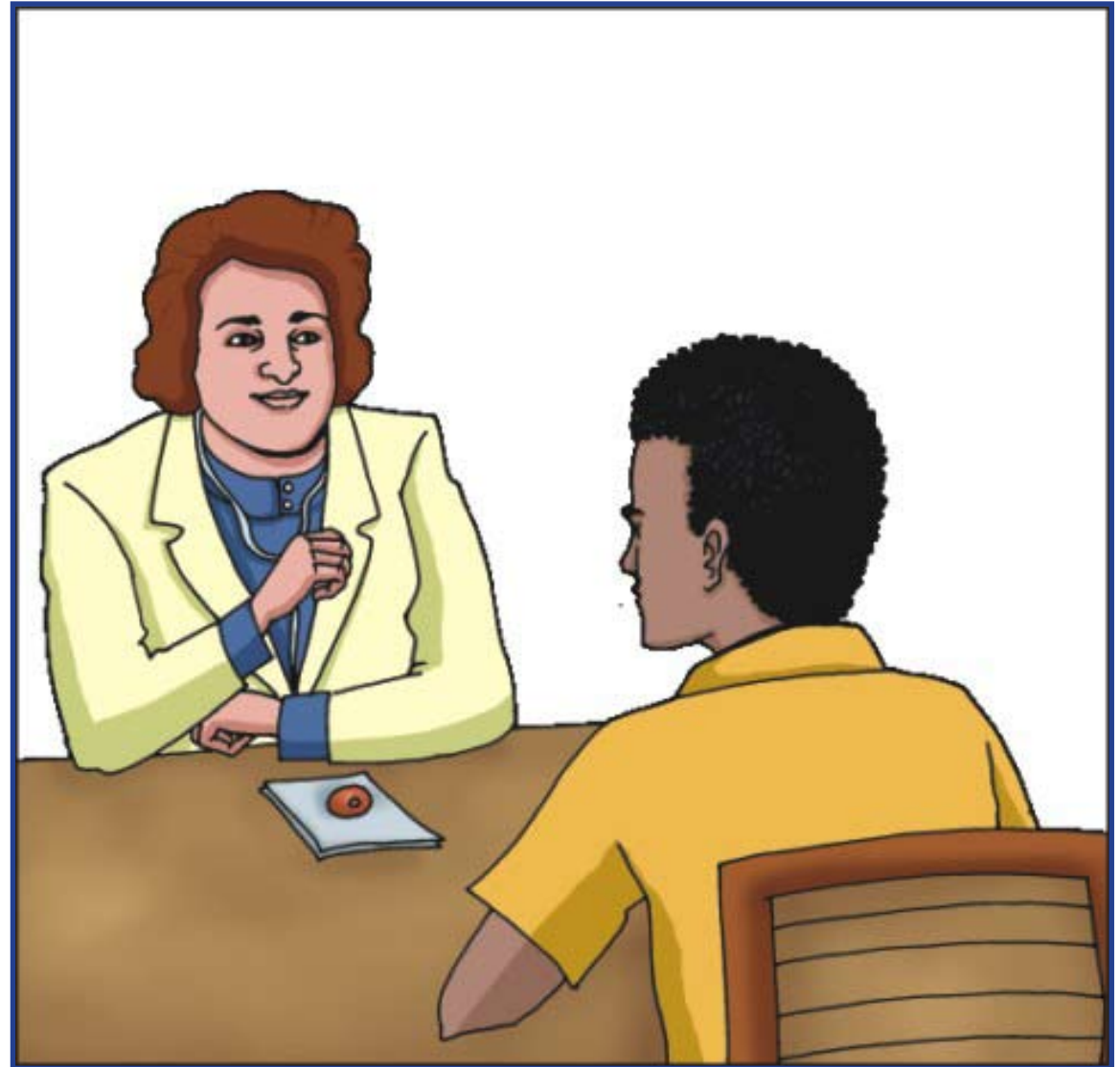
Go to a good doctor.

ARV's

Antiretroviral Treatment



- ARV's are medicines that help to fight off HIV. They do not cure HIV infection, but they will keep your body stronger.
- Talk to a good doctor who is experienced in HIV care.



AIDS and Nutrition

A person with HIV or AIDS needs to eat nutritious foods.

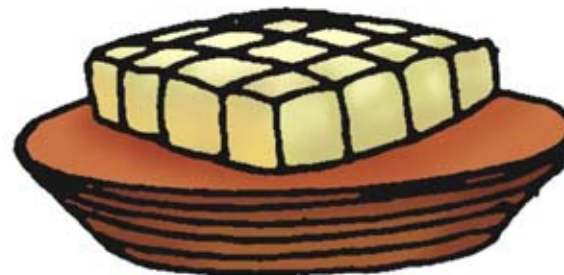
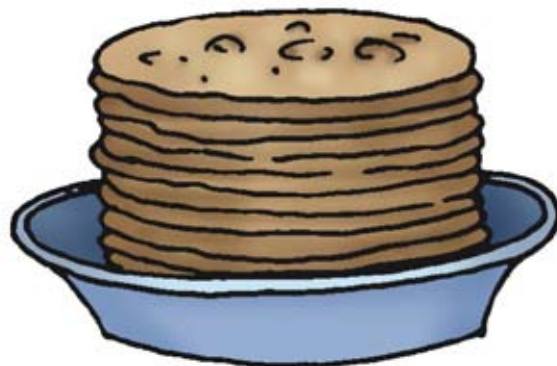
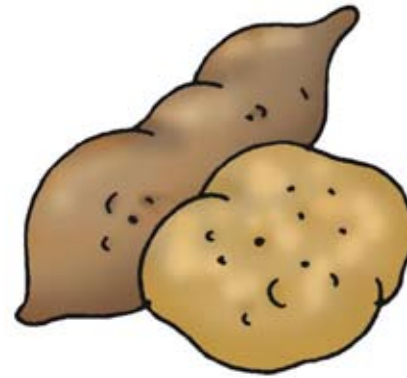
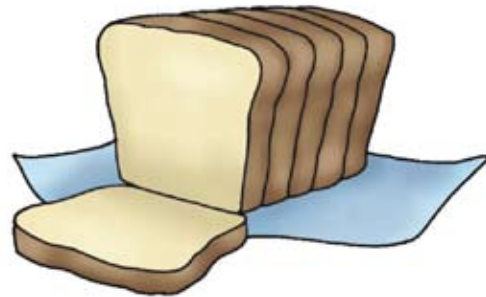
These include:

- Energy-building foods
- Body-building foods
- Foods that protect the body from infections (vitamins)



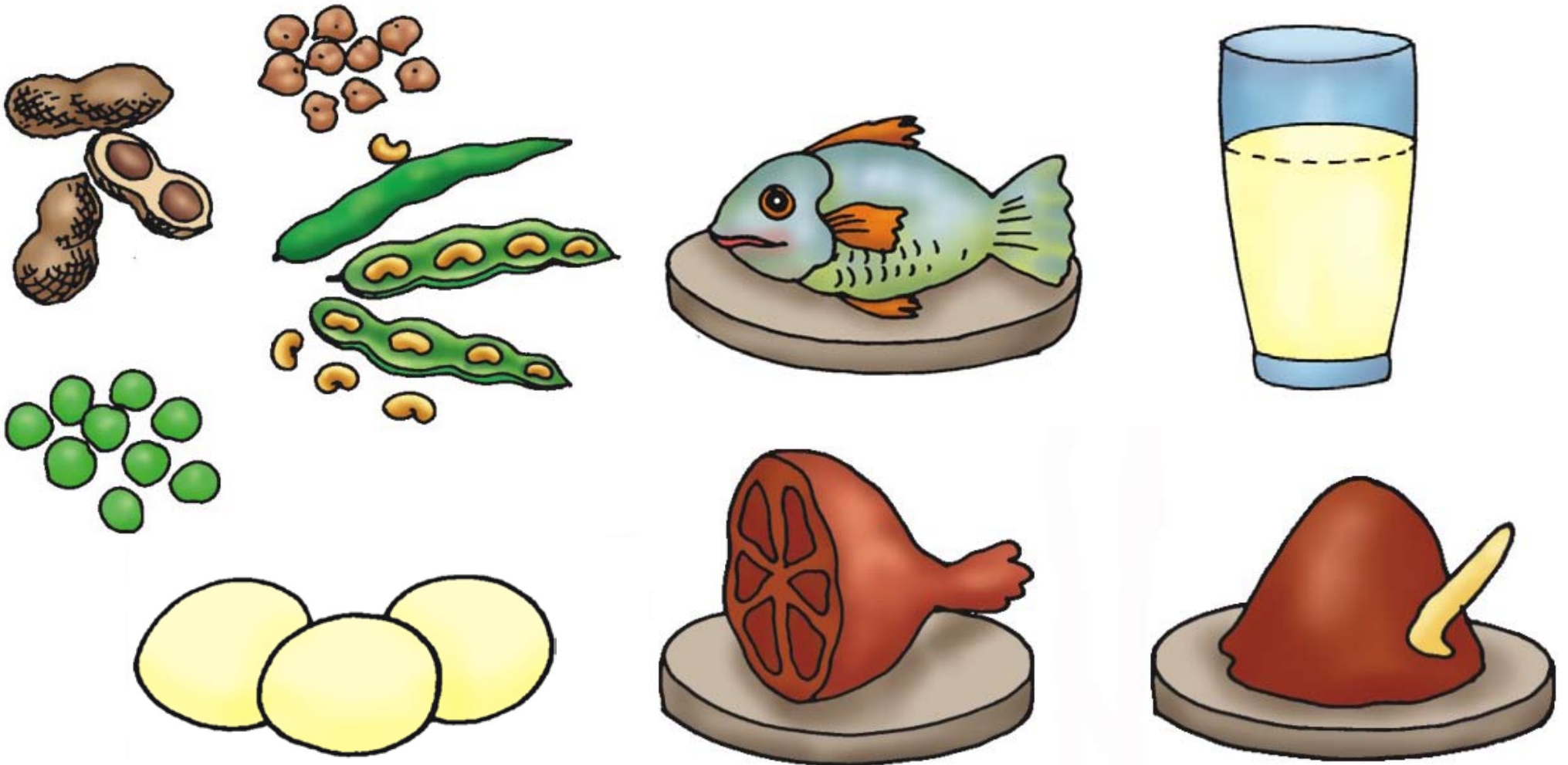
AIDS and Nutrition

Energy-giving foods (carbohydrates & fats)



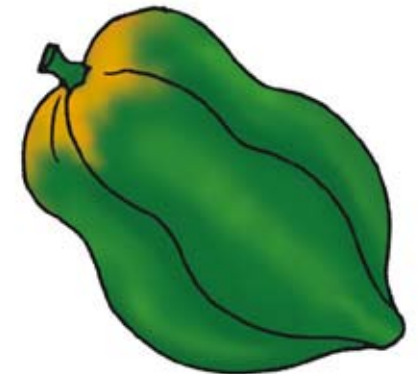
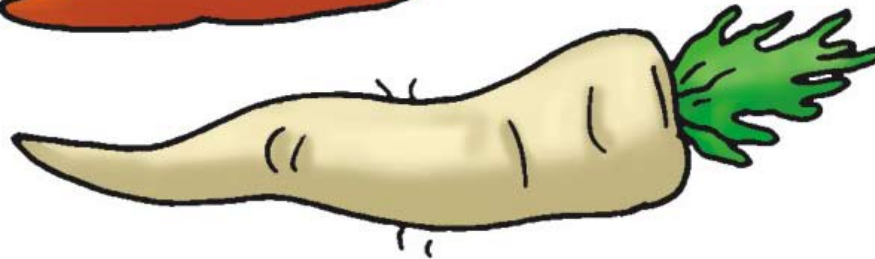
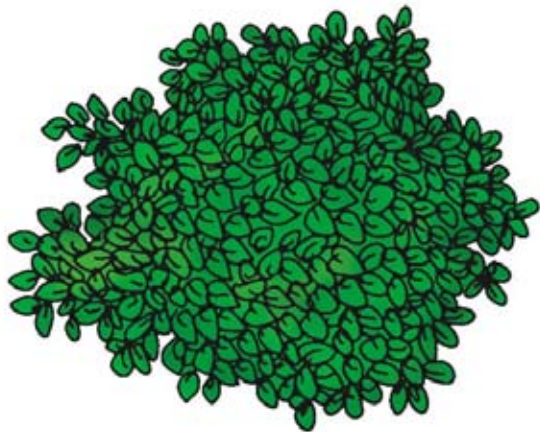
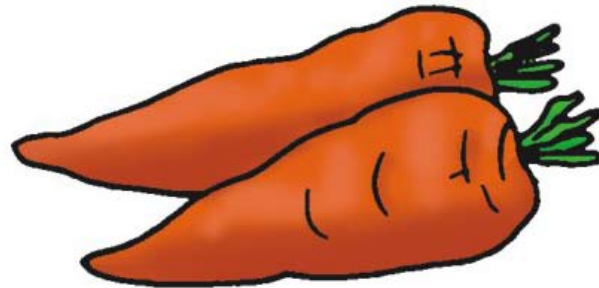
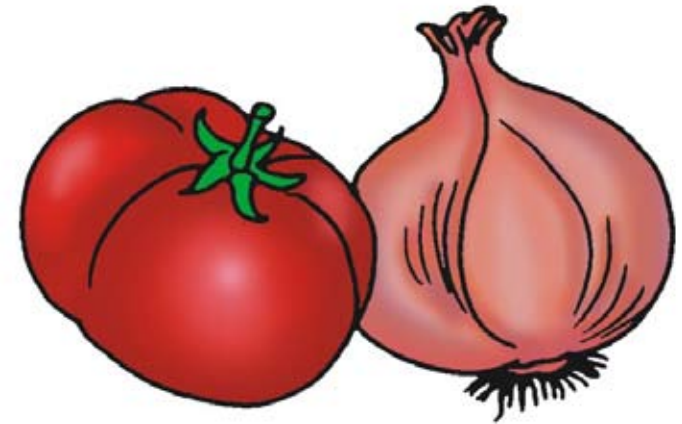
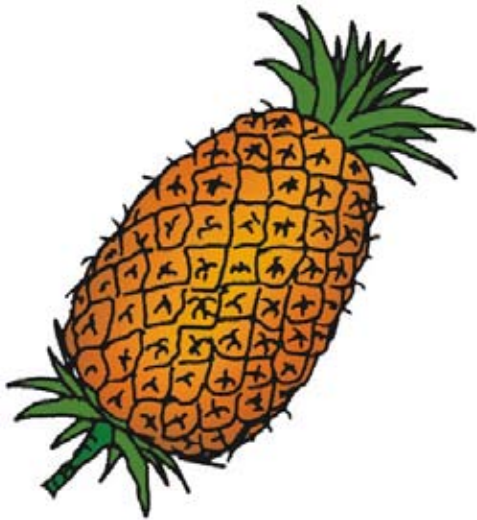
AIDS and Nutrition

Body-building foods (proteins)



AIDS and Nutrition

Health-giving foods that protect the body from infection and provide vitamins



Some general food tips.

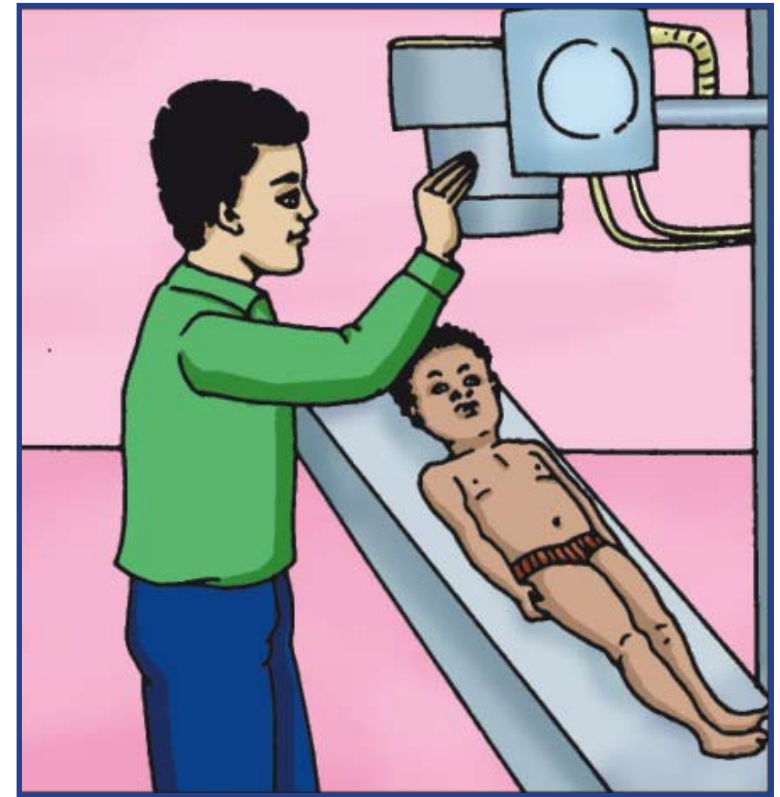
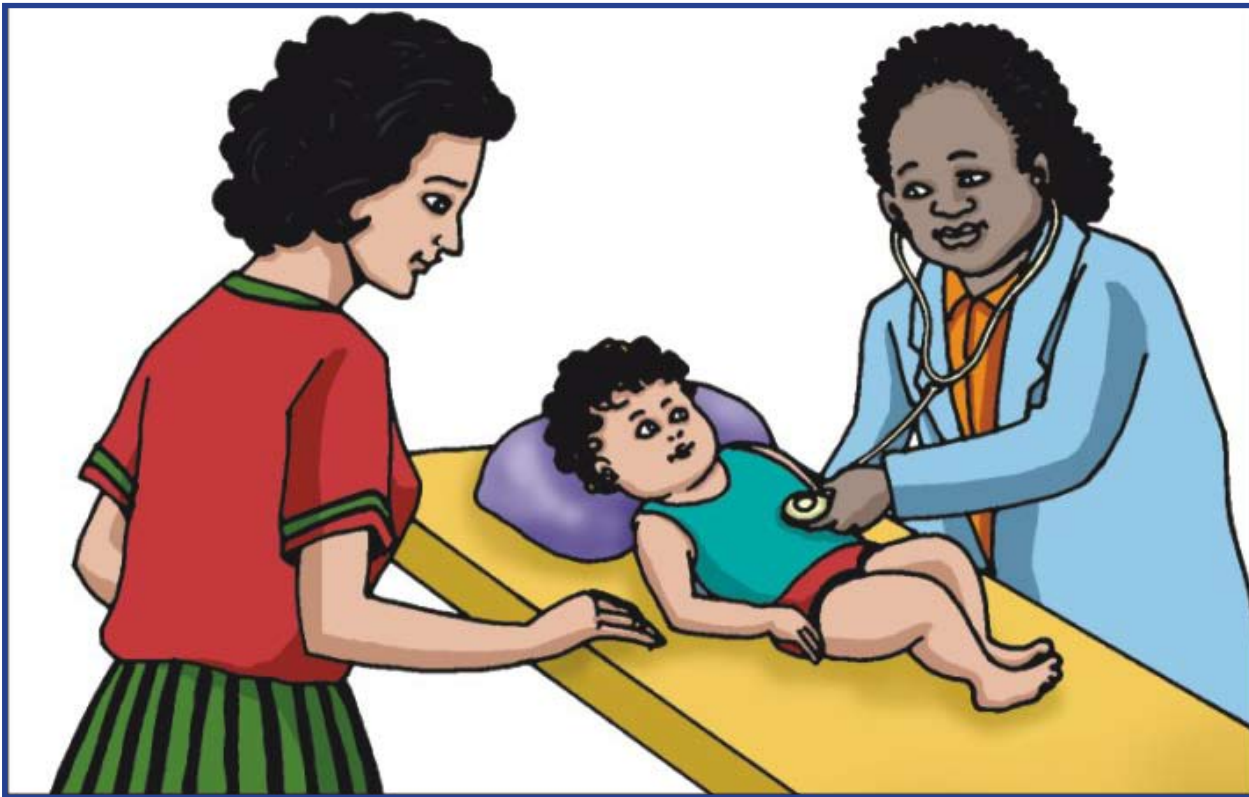
To improve appetite:

- Prepare favorite food items.
- Serve smaller, more frequent dishes.
- Eat together instead of alone.
- Steamed or cooked vegetables are more digestible than raw ones, but don't overcook.
- Cooked eggs are very cheap and very nutritious.



Caring for a child with HIV or AIDS.

- Make sure the child gets regular medical care and early treatment for opportunistic infections.



Caring for a child with HIV infection

- Have the child immunized against all immunizable diseases.
- Consult with an expert HIV doctor which vaccines are safe.



Caring for a child with HIV or AIDS.

- Feed the child well.

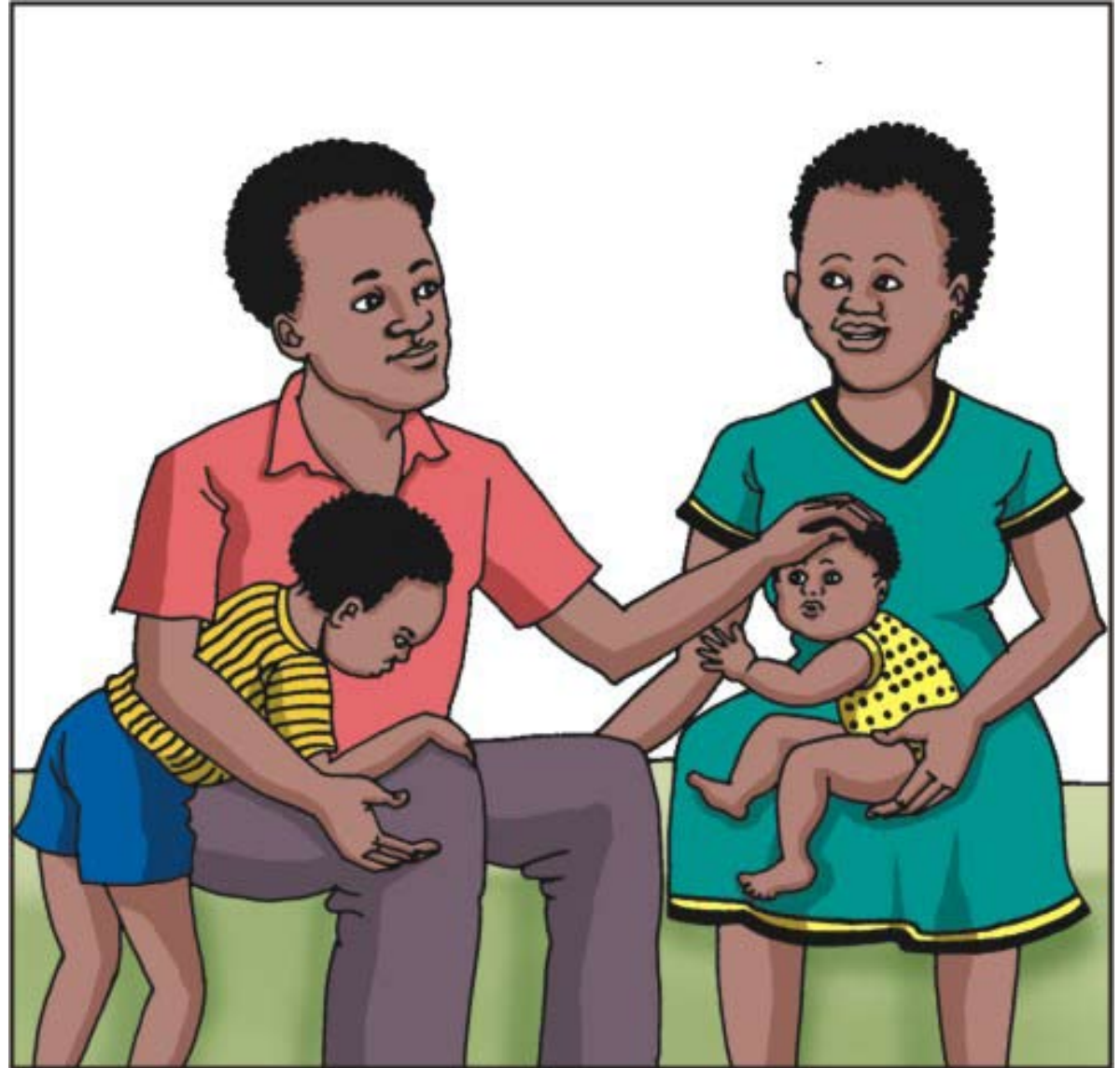


- Treat the child as normal. Show them love and do not stop them from playing with others.



Caring for healthy children whose parents have HIV or AIDS.

Show a lot of love by giving them care and guidance. Plan to spend more time with them.



Caring for healthy children whose parents have HIV or AIDS.



- Make arrangements to have them looked after by relatives and plan for their education if possible.
- Make a will which will protect their family and their property.

AIDS: making a difference.

We can all make a difference by:

- Educating family members about the prevention of HIV.
- Being good examples and role models.
- Speaking about HIV testing, good hygiene and health, and positive living for both men and women.
- Caring for our partners, children, family members and friends.



Feelings

If you know that you have HIV or AIDS, you will feel many different emotions such as:

Shock:

It is a shock to learn that you have or AIDS no matter how much you prepare for such bad news. You may cry a lot.



Feelings

Denial:

You may think the doctor was wrong and that it cannot be true because you feel strong and have no symptoms of the disease.

Anger:

You may be angry at yourself, the person who infected you, or our family or friends who are healthy. Find someone to talk to about your anger.



Feelings

Loneliness:

If you have HIV or AIDS, you will most likely feel lonely. Remember you are not alone. Many other people have HIV or AIDS.

Fear:

If you have HIV or AIDS, you may fear that:

- You may lose your job
- You will suffer pain
- You may leave your children
- Other people will know that you are HIV positive.



Feelings

Self-conscious:

You may think everyone is looking at you or talking about you.

Depression:

If you are infected, you may feel life is not worth living.

You may not want to eat or freely mix with other people.

Depression can make you weak both in mind and body.



Feelings

To resolve these feelings of depression and fear:

Talk to somebody:

- A friend or a relative you can trust
- A counsellor or healthcare worker
- Another HIV-infected person
- Join a positive network



Feelings

To express your anger:

- Draw pictures, keep a journal, exercise.
- Discuss your anger with your family, but don't direct your anger towards them.



Feelings

Acceptance:

After some time, most people will accept their situation. They may feel settled in their minds.

This is helpful because they start thinking about living positively.



Hope:

If you have HIV or AIDS, you can have HOPE about the following:

- That you may live for many years.
- That better drugs will be found by scientists
- That doctors will treat illnesses as they come.
- That because of who you are, you will be loved and accepted.
- That you can contribute much to society and not be a burden.



The importance of having HOPE

Hope improves your way of thinking and gives you spiritual strength to face each situation as it comes.

Hope can help you in the fight against HIV and AIDS, and this will enable you to live longer. Living with HOPE is living positively.



IMPORTANT NOTICE

"MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT HIV/AIDS" was developed as a practical guide to prevention, health and life. We welcome the comments of health-care workers, PLHIV, community leaders and other individuals.

Most cartoons were made by Portrait Advertising, Chennai (www.portraitindia.com). Technical assistance and financial support for the development of the "Myths and Facts about HIV/AIDS" series was from Global Strategies for HIV Prevention (www.globalstrategies.org) and Sahaya International (www.sahaya.org; USA).

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