

Knowing about Myself



Booklet
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A message for caregivers:

This booklet will help you talk to your child about HIV. It can be used with children from about 6 years of age to 10 or 12 years of age who are able to understand the information.

Before you use this booklet with your child, talk to your child about his/her health and make sure that talking about these things is comfortable. This booklet is just part of the normal talks you will have with your child. You should also try to make sure that your child is old enough to understand how to keep this information private, if that is what you and your family want.

When you get ready to tell your child about HIV, try to make sure that you are in a comfortable and private place.

When your child hears this information, he or she may feel frightened or angry or may become very quiet. All of this is very normal. Do not try to change what your child feels—try to give the comfort that they need and let them know that they can always ask questions. Also tell your child as often as you need to that HIV is not anybody's fault.

Knowing about Myself is the second in a series of four booklets. The other booklets in this series include:

- *How to Keep Healthy*, booklet 1
- *Living a Life of Health*, booklet 3
- *Teen Talk*, a question-and-answer guide for adolescents living with HIV

What you are doing may be a hard thing to do, but it is very important to pass this information onto your child when he/she is ready to hear it. If you wait too long to tell your child, it may be harder for him/her to handle. Also, remember you can always ask the counsellors, nurses, or doctors any questions as they come up. They are there to support you and your family.



Do you remember when we read *How to Keep Healthy?*



What questions do you have about that booklet?

Today, we are going to talk about your health.

Do you remember the things that you need to do to keep healthy?

Eat healthy foods. Sleep and rest when you feel tired.



Knowing about Myself

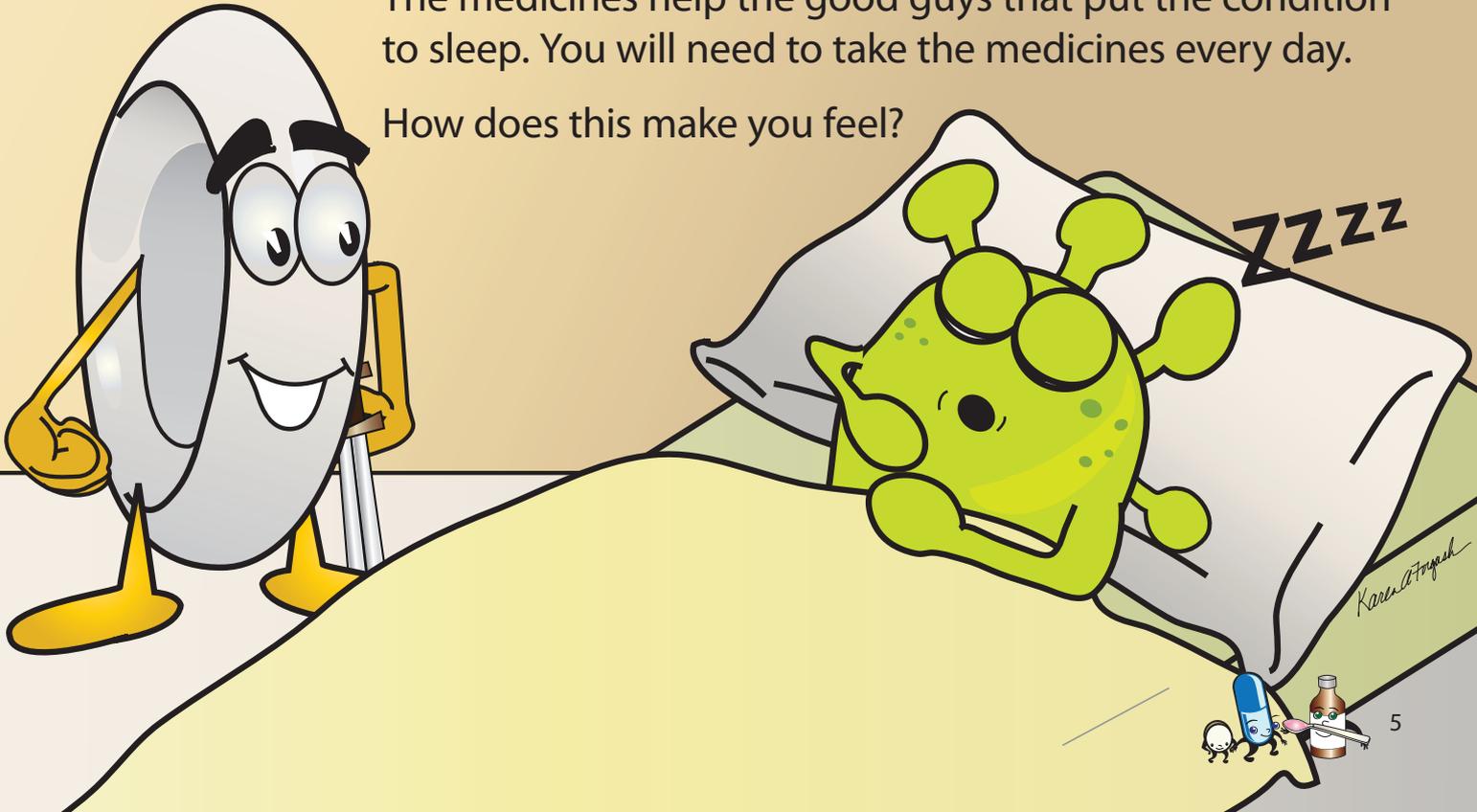
Even when you are feeling well, the condition that we read about in the last booklet is in your blood. That is why it is important to go to the clinic regularly.

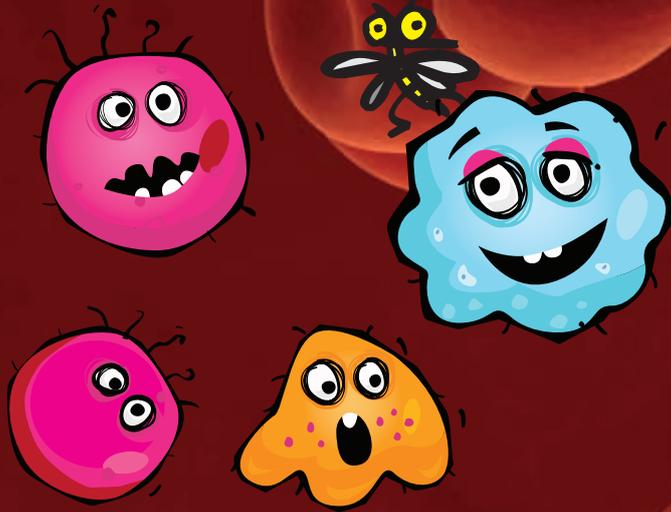


If your doctor thinks you need medicine, you will receive it at the clinic.

The medicines help the good guys that put the condition to sleep. You will need to take the medicines every day.

How does this make you feel?





Inside your body, you have these little things called “cells” that carry around your blood.

Some of these cells are “good guy cells” that help your body to fight off this condition. Maybe we can think of the condition as the “bad guy”.

This condition (the bad guy) gets inside these good guy cells and kills them off, so that your body cannot fight off the condition any longer.





The good guy cells that put the condition to sleep are called CD4 cells. The CD4 cells help you fight off this condition.

Have you ever heard of the word "CD4" or "CD4 count"?

When you do not have enough CD4 cells, you can get sick.

Do you have any questions so far?



This condition is strong, but we can fight it.

Do you know the name of your condition?

You have HIV.

Have you heard anything about HIV?

Tell me the things that you have heard.

Did you know that we can fight HIV by taking medicines every day? Your doctor will decide the right time for you to begin taking medicine. If you take it every day, you will be healthy and can live to be very old.



Sometimes when children hear they have HIV, they get frightened, angry, or sad.

You may want to cry. Maybe you want to talk about it, or maybe you don't want to talk about it. Either is fine.



Feel free to ask me any questions at any time. If I can't answer your question, we can go to the clinic and ask the doctor or nurse.

Should we take a break now, or do you want me to continue?



Do you want to write down or draw how you feel at the moment?



HAPPY



OK



SAD



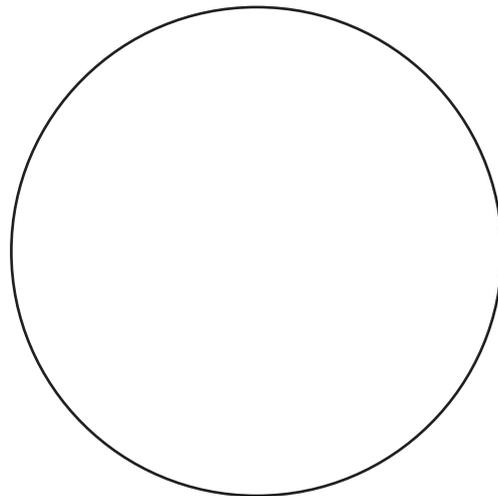
ANGRY



DEPRESSED



WORRIED



I feel _____

[fill in the blank and draw a picture].

Which of these faces shows how you are feeling now?



Do you have any questions?

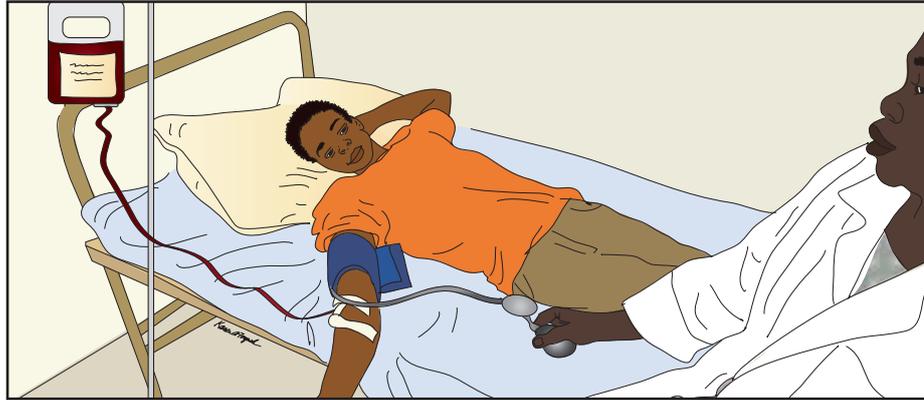
HIV is a virus, just like the viruses that cause colds. Even though both HIV and the common cold are caused by viruses, the cold virus eventually goes away, but HIV doesn't.



HIV lives in your blood and makes it hard to fight off sickness, which is why you may get sick more often than other children.



Children can get HIV in different ways.



Some children got it before they were born or when they were born. Some got it when extra blood was put inside them at the hospital (a transfusion).

Some children may have been abused.

It is not your fault that you have HIV. If you got HIV when you were inside your mother's belly, it is not her fault either. It's nobody's fault; it just happened.



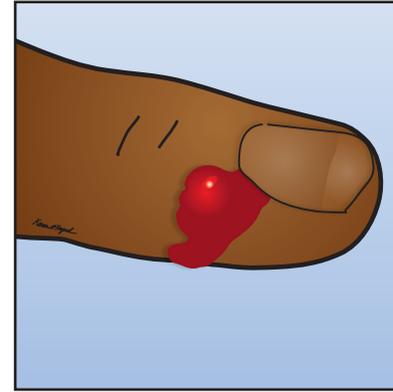
Now that you know what you have, the most important thing is to take care of your health.

That means taking your medicine every day once your doctor has decided that you are ready.

How do you feel about having to take medicine every day?



You cannot give HIV to anyone by touching them, hugging them, playing sports or games with them, eating from the same plate, or using the same toilet.



The only way people can get HIV is:

- From their mother, either before they were born or from breast milk.
- By getting the blood of someone with HIV into their own bodies.
- From sexual relations.



How do you feel about having HIV?

You did not do anything to get HIV.

It is something that just happened, and we will learn how to live with it.

You are no different from any other child.

Just like other children,
you can...

- Play
- Have friends
- Go to school
- Get a job someday
- Get married someday
- Have babies someday



If you get teased, or if you are feeling bad...

Talk to an older person, like an aunt, grandmother, or teacher, so that you can get your feelings out.

But because HIV is a private thing, let us talk together about who you would feel comfortable telling.

Can you think of someone you trust?



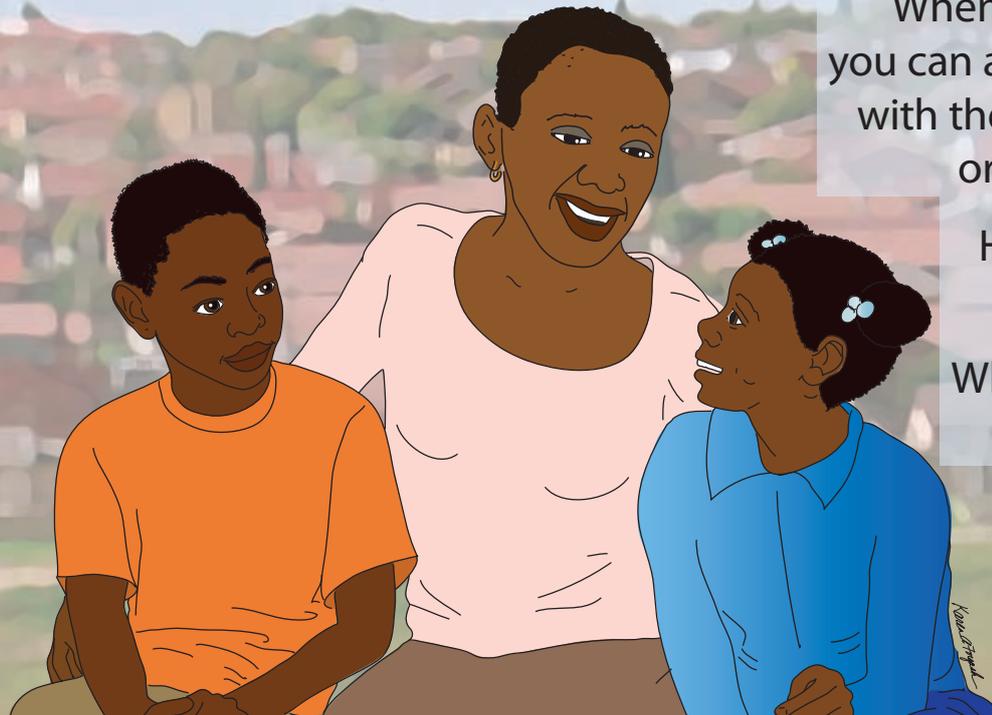
I am telling you about HIV because I think you are old enough now to learn about your condition.

And now you know why it is so important for you to go to the clinic and take medicines if the doctor or nurse tells you to.

When you have questions, you can ask me or we can talk with the counsellors, nurses, or doctors at the clinic.

How do you feel after reading this booklet?

What questions do you have for me now?





Acknowledgments

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Please visit www.AIDSTAR-One.com to download a copy of this booklet.



