



This information is to assist you if you are:

- HIV positive and pregnant or thinking about pregnancy
- HIV positive with children
- For more information about pregnancy issues read the Pregnancy Fact Sheet in this series.

For some women the idea of having children has always been very important. They have assumed they will be mothers at some time. For others, having children has been less important and some women have decided they will never have a child. Some women consider it every now and then, thinking they will decide later.

Being HIV positive may push you to think about whether you will become a parent, or may mean reconsidering some of your earlier decisions. In Australia about half of the women who are HIV positive are also mothers. Some had children after knowing they were HIV positive, some already had children when they were diagnosed, and others found out they were HIV positive and pregnant at the same time.

### Support Services

Being a parent means many things - hard work, a sense of responsibility, uncertainty, anxiety, frustration, fun and laughter. These, and many other things, are part of the shared experience of being a parent - the good days and the bad days.

There are a range of general services available to assist parents. They are listed at the end of this Fact Sheet. If you want to use a service you might need to think about whether you will talk to anyone there about being HIV positive. You don't have to tell them you are HIV positive, however you may want to if you think it may mean the service will better meet your particular needs. If you want to talk it through before you decide, a good place to begin is with the Family Support worker at the AIDS Council of NSW (ACON) Ph (02) 9206 2079.

There are a number of specific services which provide support for families affected by HIV.

### ACON HIV Support Services for women

#### *Positive Women's Peer Support Project*

Ph(02) 9206 2012 provides information, support, advocacy and referrals for and by HIV positive women. It also organises regular retreats and other activities.

*Family Support Project* Ph (02) 9206 2079 ensures that families living with and affected by HIV/ AIDS, are able to access the full range of services which offer care for children outside the family for short or long periods of time. It also links these services with HIV/AIDS specific services.

#### *Women Partners of Bisexual Men Project*

Ph (02) 9206 2026 provides support, advocacy, resources and referral for women partners and their families.

#### *Community Support Network (CSN)*

Ph (02) 9206 2031 trains volunteers to give home-based practical and/or physical care for people living with HIV/AIDS. It also has housing and transport services.

#### *ACON Branches*

<i>Western Sydney</i>	<i>Ph (02) 9206 2400</i>
<i>Northern Rivers</i>	<i>Ph (066) 221 555</i>
<i>Hunter</i>	<i>Ph (049) 293 464</i>
<i>Illawarra</i>	<i>Ph (042) 261 163</i>

#### *Sydney Children's Hospital HIV Services*

Ph: (02) 9382 1653/4 provides a wide range of medical, nursing, social and emotional support for children and their families living with HIV. It also provides support and counselling services for HIV positive pregnant women.

*Camp Goodtime* is a three-day camp offered free of charge to parents and children infected or affected by HIV. The aim is to create an informal space which supports communication about sensitive issues between and within families through activities, workshops, social events, etc.

*Support groups* offer a safe place where families living with HIV can deal with some of the issues and feelings they have. The aim is to reduce isolation and provide a space for information sharing. Groups for parents and children are run every three months at the same time on a Saturday.

factsheet 6 of 6

A series of fact sheets for women about HIV.

- 1 Testing
- 2 Newly Diagnosed
- 3 Symptoms
- 4 Treatments
- 5 Pregnancy
- 6 Parenting

Produced by  
Family Planning NSW  
Ph 9716 6099  
Fax 9716 6164  
and  
AIDS Council of NSW  
(ACON)  
Ph 9206 2000  
Fax 9206 2069



*Troy Lovegrove Foundation* gives financial help to families of children who are living with HIV/AIDS and assists in providing support groups and places for families and children to meet, talk openly and offer mutual support. Referral is needed through a social worker.

**TRAIDS (Transfusion-related AIDS) Ph (02) 9843 3143** provides support, counselling, advocacy, referrals, groups (for people with medically-acquired HIV) .

**Ankali Project Ph (02) 9332 1090** provides a range of emotional support services for people living with HIV/AIDS, partners, family and friends.

### Telling other people

There may be times when you want to tell others such as family members, friends and colleagues about being HIV positive. Think about who you trust and who will be supportive, and what their reactions and questions might be. Setting up situations in which you feel good about yourself and where there is trust and safety means you can discuss confidentiality as part of the process. Being HIV positive often means being an educator and support person for those you tell. Sometimes this can create an extra burden for you. A counsellor or social worker can be helpful in working out who and how to tell someone you are HIV positive.

For more information about these issues read the **Newly Diagnosed fact sheet in this series.**

It may be helpful to keep in mind that telling others is likely to begin a series of HIV-related conversations. This could involve telling people that you or your child are HIV positive.

You may want/need to talk with service providers eg. health workers, school, child care, if you think they need to know in order to provide you, your child/family with the best possible care and service. This is a very personal decision. Some families have chosen to tell people and have received a great deal of support and relief from the burden of keeping this secret. For other families, telling people can seem too overwhelming.

### Talking to your children

You might want to talk to your children about HIV or you might decide not to. Telling them about being HIV positive yourself or that they are HIV positive will probably be one of the most difficult tasks you face. This process could take some time. You need to work out when, what and how much to tell your child, depending on their level of understanding. You will probably be the best judge of this.

Think about whether it would be helpful to have someone with you, or even if you would like someone you trust to talk to your child first, perhaps a counsellor or another family member. Some HIV positive women have found this to be very supportive both for themselves and for the children. Before telling your children, think about the support they will need - people with whom they feel at ease in expressing what they need, asking questions, and just being with them. There might be other family members, other children of HIV positive parents, close family friends or children's

support workers who you would like to involve in telling your child or who may provide ongoing support. It is important that everyone involved is consistent in what they say.

### Planning for the future

All parents think about their children's future and who will care for them if anything should happen. Being a parent with HIV can mean that this sort of planning has a high priority.

It might take some time to make the arrangements you want. While you are feeling well, it is worth checking out everything you can think of. Many families assume that if something happens to one of them, the others will step in and provide what is needed. If this is what you want, you might need to confirm that this is possible with family members. This will mean being clear about what you want from them, and being clear about what is being offered by them. You may also wish to make other arrangements which may or may not involve your family.

Contact the Family Support Project at ACON, Ph (02) 9206 2079 for information about respite care options.

It could also be helpful to think about different times when you want a break, or if you need to go to hospital. Making arrangements for the care of your children ahead of time can reduce the stress of those situations. Planning will need to take account of changes in your life and in other people's lives. There will be times when there are a lot of people around to help, and other times when there seems to be no-one. Think about the range of family, friends and services which will provide a support system you can use in both the short and long term. You might also want help with putting your wishes in a legal framework. HIV/AIDS Legal Centre (HALC) Ph (02) 9206 2060 gives free legal advice to people living with HIV/AIDS, their partners, on a range of legal issues including wills, power of attorney, and guardianship issues.

### General services

These services may or may not be well informed about HIV related issues.

**Family Support Association of NSW** Ph (02) 9743 6565  
for information about your nearest service

**Parent Line (statewide)** 13 2055

**Home Care Service of NSW**  
listed alphabetically in the phone book

**Women's Information and Referral** Ph 1800 817 227

**Tresillian - 24 hr parent helpline** Ph (02) 9569 5400

**Local Councils Child Care Services** See phone book

For more information about support services, read **CONTACTS**, a comprehensive directory of services for people with HIV/AIDS in NSW. This is available from People Living with HIV/AIDS (NSW) Inc, Ph (02) 9361 6750.

Telephone numbers are correct at time of publication but are not continually updated. You may need to check the numbers in the telephone directory.