Caring for Children

A Guide for Caregivers

Children are delicate and need very special attention and care. This document will help caregivers to support their children with the right care that they need.

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CONTENTS

The Act of Caregiving

Who is a Caregiver?

A caregiver is a person who takes responsibility for someone who cannot fully care for themselves.

What is the Role of a Child's Caregiver?

- Provide care and emotional support
- Educate their child about their treatment and health
- Supervise their child's medication and other treatments
- Ensure the security of their wards, physically, emotionally and otherwise
- Uphold their child's rights e.g., right to health, education, mental wellness etc.
- Connect their child with additional care providers. e.g., psychosocial, religious support, etc.

Healthy Nutrition & Lifestyle for Children

Why is Nutrition in Children Important?

Nutrition is important for the survival of children, it promotes healthy growth and development.

What can I do to Support a Child's Nutrition?

01 **Start breastfeeding within one hour of birth**

02 **Feed infants for the first six months of life - breastmilk only without food or liquid including water. This is called exclusive breastfeeding**

03 **Introduce solid food at 6 months and continue breastfeeding – make sure they are nutritionally adequate and safe**

Women living with HIV should discontinue breastfeeding at 1-year

04 **Make sure your child drinks enough water**

How Can I Support My Child to Have a Healthy Lifestyle?

01 **Encourage play and physical activity to keep your child fit and energetic**

02 **Support your child to get enough sleep every night**

How can food be nutritionally adequate?

Balanced diet

- Balanced diet can support your child's immune system. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein-rich foods in the child's meals. Use readily available food (Eg Pap and Akara, Rice and Beans, Soup and Eba, Rice and Egg, meat, chicken etc)

How to Keep Food Safe

Practice good hygiene

- Handwashing
- Clean cooking environment

Proper food handling

- Keep uncooked food away from rodents (E.g. rats.)
- Cover cooked food and keep away from flies

Immunization

What is vaccination?

- Vaccination is the act of administering a vaccine, either by injection or orally.
- Vaccines contain weakened or inactive parts of a particular germ (virus or bacteria) that cause disease.
- This allows the body to safely learn to recognize and fight off the germ without causing the actual illness.
- As a caregiver, ensuring your child receives recommended vaccinations is crucial for protecting their health.

What is Immunization?

- Immunization is the process by which the body is made resistant to a specific disease after receiving a vaccine.
- The vaccine stimulates the body's defense system (immune system) to recognize and remember the germ.
- This creates a "memory" so that if the body encounters the same germ in the future, it can quickly and effectively fight it off, preventing illness.
- Immunization is a safe and effective way to protect loved ones from serious diseases.

How do Vaccines work?

- Vaccines stimulate the body's defence system (immune system) to recognise and fight specific disease, protecting the person against subsequent infection or disease.
- When your child gets immunized, they receive a vaccine that helps their body learn to fight against certain diseases to prevent severe illness.
- This way, if they're ever exposed to those diseases, their body will be ready to defend itself.

⚠ **NOTE:**
Each vaccine provides immunity against a disease; therefore, a series of vaccinations is administered to children to protect them from many vaccine-preventable diseases.

It's essential to follow the recommended vaccination schedule provided by healthcare professionals.

Why is immunization important?

- Protection from Preventable Diseases: Immunization protects children from serious and sometimes life-threatening diseases, such as measles, polio, and whooping cough.
- Immunity Building: Vaccines help children develop immunity early in life, protecting them during their most vulnerable years.
- Reduced Disease Spread: Immunization not only protects individual children but also helps prevent the spread of disease within families and communities. This is especially important for protecting vulnerable individuals who cannot be vaccinated.
- Healthier Lives: By preventing serious illnesses, immunization contributes to longer, healthier lives for children.

What diseases can you prevent by vaccinating your child?

- As a caregiver, you can protect against diseases like cervical cancer, poliomyelitis, measles, influenza, rubella, parotitis (mumps), diphtheria, tetanus, hepatitis A and B, bacterial pneumonia, rotavirus, diarrheal diseases and meningitis.
- These are also known as **vaccine-preventable diseases.**

Age	Vaccine type	Diseases prevented
At Birth	BCG, OPV0, Hep B0	Tuberculosis, Polio and Hepatitis B
6 weeks	Pentavalent (DPT, Hep B and Hib) 1, Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine 1, OPV 1, Rota 1, IPV 1	Diphtheria, Pertussis (whooping cough), Tetanus, Hepatitis B, Influenza type b, Pneumonia, meningitis, gastroenteritis
10 weeks	Pentavalent (DPT, Hep B and Hib) 2, Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine 2, OPV 2, Rota 2,	Diphtheria, Pertussis (whooping cough), Tetanus, Hepatitis B, Influenza type b, Pneumonia, meningitis, gastroenteritis
14 weeks	Pentavalent (DPT, Hep B and Hib) 3, Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine 3, OPV 3, Rota 3, IPV2	Diphtheria, Pertussis (whooping cough),, Tetanus, Hepatitis B, Influenza type b, Pneumonia, meningitis, and gastroenteritis
6 months	Vitamin A (1st dose)	Night blindness
9 months	Measles (1st dose), Yellow fever, Meningitis vaccine	Measles, Yellow fever, and Meningitis
12 months	Vitamin A (2nd dose)	Night blindness

Common side effects of Immunization that you might manage:

- Expect minor reactions like fever, soreness at the injection site, and slight fatigue
- They are usually mild, and they resolve on their own within a few days.
- Ask your healthcare provider for more information.

What should you do if your child misses a vaccine dose?

Contact your healthcare provider or visit your nearest health clinic as soon as possible.

Supporting Children in Emergency Health Situations

Vomiting & Diarrhoea

- As a caregiver, you'll encounter vomiting and diarrhoea , which could signal various illnesses like gastroenteritis, malaria, urinary tract infection or meningitis.
- It can be life-threatening if not managed properly

What do I do when my child is vomiting or having diarrhoea?

- Hydrate your child with Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) or a homemade Salt-Sugar Solution
- Go to the clinic as soon as possible to diagnose and treat the underlying cause.

How do I make and use ORS

- Wash your hand and all the containers you intend to use
- Boil 1 litre of water (i.e two 50cl bottles)
- Allow the water to cool
- Put the I litre of water into a clean container
- Add one sachet of ORS into the container
- Stir/Shake very well
- Give your child ORS to drink after each passed vomitus or stool
  Quantity of ORS to give per vomitus/stool= 10 x baby weight.
- Discard whatever is left after 24 hours

What do I do if I do not have ORS in the house?
An alternative to ORS is called Salt-Sugar Solution.
Here is how you can make it.


Wash your hand and all the containers you intend to use


Boil 1 litre of water (i.e two 50cl bottles)


Allow the water to cool


Put the I litre of water into a clean container


Add eight level teaspoons of sugar


Add ½ teaspoon of salt


Stir/Shake very well


Give your child to drink liberally


Discard whatever is left after 24 hours

Note: If your child is having diarrhoea with vomiting, do not give your child sugary or soft drinks because these can make the diarrhoea worse, use the right quantity of both the water and the ORS (or Salt/Sugar).

Fever

Fever is also a common symptom in children. Fever occurs when the body temperature is higher than normal (37.5˚C).
Temperature is measured using a thermometer (keep one at home).

It is a common symptom in Upper respiratory tract infections, Gastroenteritis (infection on the digestive tract), Malaria, Urinary tract infection, Infection in the brain (Meningitis)

Why do children have fever?
Fever is a part of the body's natural defences against infection.

What should I do if my child has a fever?
- Check temperature: Use a thermometer to confirm fever.
- Keep your child hydrated: Give plenty of drinks.
- Use tepid sponge: Use lukewarm water to help reduce fever.

Note: Tepid sponging should not be done with cold water, because it reduces heat loss and traps heat in deeper parts of the body which is worse

Medicines like paracetamol and ibuprofen should not be used for fever unless your child appears distressed.

Note: Paracetamol and ibuprofen do not treat the cause of the fever - they merely help to ease discomfort.

Go to the clinic as soon as possible to identify the cause of the fever and receive adequate treatment.

Understanding HIV

Have you heard of the Immune System?

This is the body's defence system; it has 'soldier' cells called CD4 cells that fight infection.

What is HIV?

HIV is a virus that affects the immune system (soldier cells, making it harder for the body to fight infections.

How is HIV transmitted?

There are 2 main ways that a child can contract HIV.

1. From a mother living with HIV, and it can happen during:

Pregnancy

Labour & Delivery

Breastfeeding

There is a very low risk of transmitting HIV from a mother to her child if she takes her medications correctly (adherence) during pregnancy and breastfeeding

2. From body fluids containing HIV. e.g.

Blood transfusion with unscreened blood

Sexual intercourse with someone living with HIV (Sexual abuse)

Can HIV be treated?
TREATED: YES
CURED: NO

Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is the name of the combination treatment for HIV.

What happens when HIV is not treated?
The virus can weaken the immune system over time, eventually leading to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

How do you treat HIV?
By taking the right drug, in the right quantity and at the right time. This is also known as **Adherence**.

For any medication to be effective, the quantity of medication must be adequate for the weight of the child

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Why is Adherence important?

When medications are taken as prescribed

a. They stop viruses like HIV from multiplying.
b. They quicken the recovery period
c. They protect your child's health.

How can I help my child stay adherent?

Set reminders using alarm clocks, phones, etc

Use a pill organizer

Medication can be taken during routine daily activities like immediately after morning prayer, after meals after brushing teeth etc

Encourage your child with small incentives (e.g sweets, dissolve medication in glucose solution

Use words of affirmation (e.g. "Great job", "Well-done", "you are so brave")

Liken them to their role models or favourite cartoon characters

How can Adherence be Calculated?

Total doses taken in a month/total doses prescribed for the month x 100

Example:

- 30 doses prescribed for a month (1 pill a day for 30 days)
- Daily pill taken for 29 days (1 missed dose)

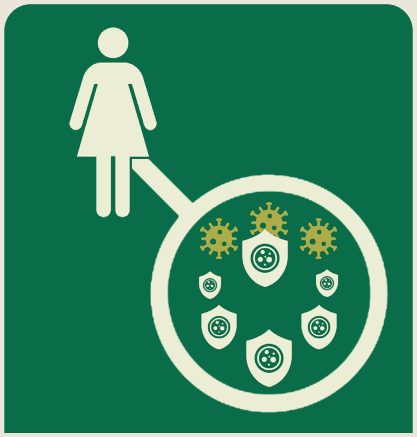
$$\textbf{Adherence} = \frac{29}{30} \times 100 = 97\%$$

Good Adherence is **95% and above**
Bad Adherence is **less than 95%**

Monitoring Treatment for HIV

How does the treatment work in the body?

When HIV first enters the body, there are many Soldier Cells (CD4 cells) in the immune system



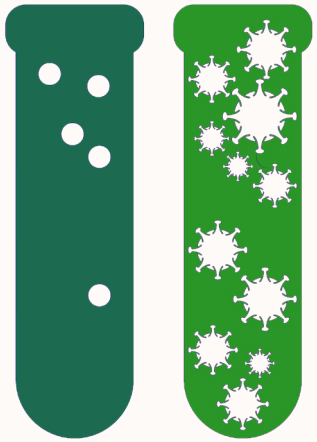
Soon after infection, the virus multiplies quickly, and the immune system tries to fight the virus

Over time, the amount of virus (HIV) increases, and the soldier cells (CD4 cells) die until there are too few left to fight infections

With good adherence the medications stop the virus from multiplying, so the soldier cells (CD4 cells) increase and fight infections

CD4 test is a blood test that measures the number of Soldier Cells (CD4 cells) in the blood.

- This test helps check how well the body's immune (defence) system is working.
- CD4 test is done just before starting HIV treatment, or before restarting treatment if a person has stopped before, or if it appears that the treatment is no longer working



What will the result of the CD4 Cell Count tell me?

- Less than 200 cells/mm^3: this means the immune system is very weak, and the risk of opportunistic infections is high.
- 200 cells/ml and above: this means the immune system has not been badly damaged by HIV

Note

HIV severely weakens the immune system of children younger than five years who have never received HIV treatment, so they do not need a CD4 test but should start treatment as quickly as possible.

What will the result of the Viral load test tell me?

The Viral Load test tells us the amount of the virus (HIV) in a drop of blood, and is done every six months. The result can be:

- Target not detected: The virus is too low it cannot be found in the blood and there is no risk of passing it to others.
- <1000 copies/ml: The virus is suppressed, but there is still some risk of transmission.
- >1000 copies/ml: The virus is unsuppressed and the risk of passing it to others is high.

If virally unsuppressed, the next test is done after three months of intensive adherence support.

Good adherence is crucial to maintaining undetectable and suppressed viral load levels.

Note that:

Even a person who had target not detected before can have an unsuppressed viral load

Emotional and Social Support for Children Living with Chronic Illness

Children living with chronic illnesses such as HIV, sickle cell disorders, and diabetes may feel different because of their illness.

Build Confidence
Support your child's self-esteem by focusing on their strengths and abilities.

Create a safe space for discussion
Establish a network of trusted people they can turn to for support (Hand of safety)

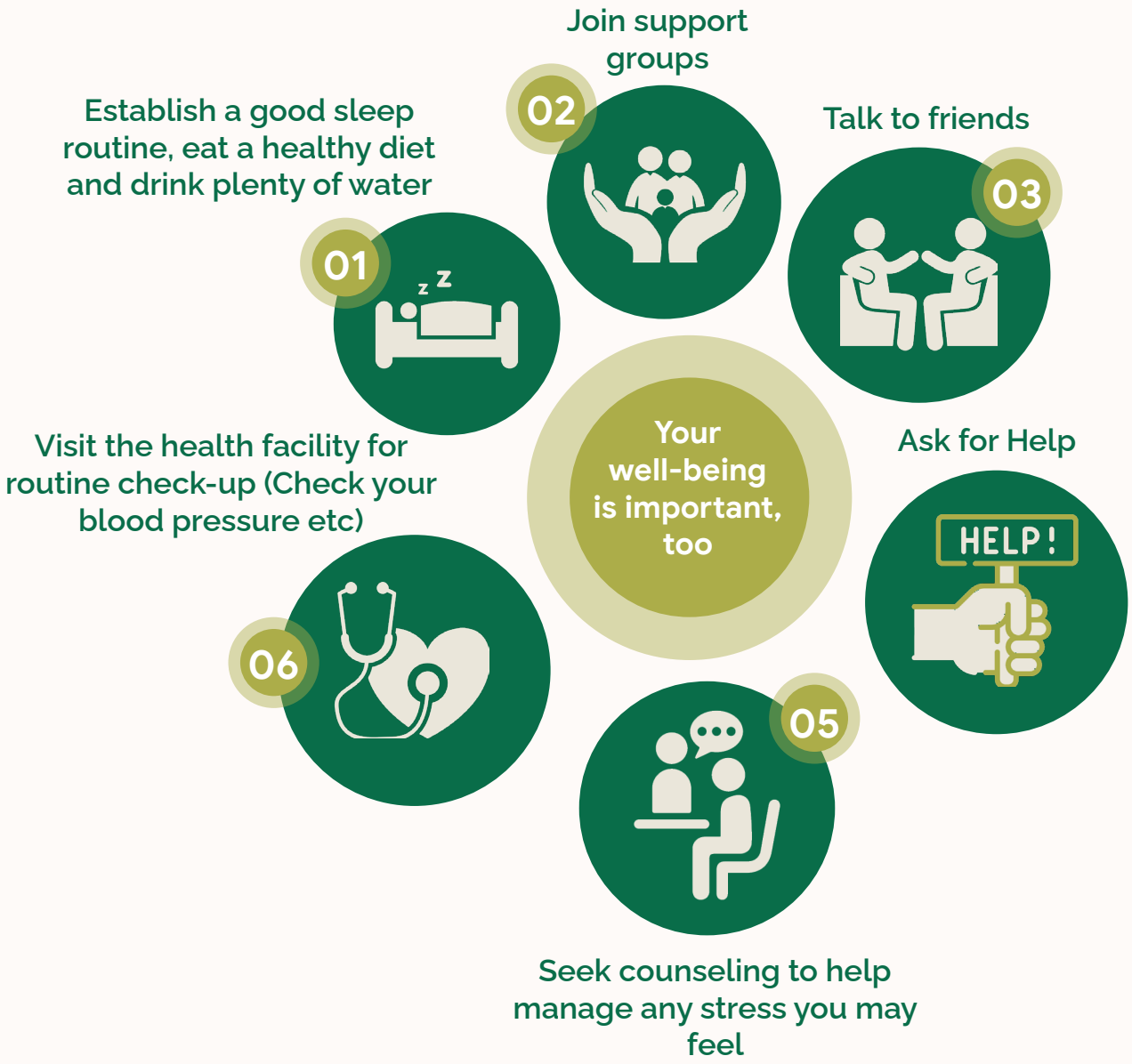
Link your children to age-appropriate support groups

Talk About HIV
Use age-appropriate language to help your child understand HIV and focus on how treatment helps them stay strong.

Discuss Stigma
Let your child know that people may treat them differently if they know their HIV status. However, they should know they are not alone, and they can always talk to the people in their hand of safety.

Work with your healthcare worker to facilitate one-on-one interaction with other children living with HIV.

Taking Care of Yourself as a Caregiver



Special Note to Caregivers

Remember!

You are not alone. Many families are facing similar challenges and are finding ways to thrive.

Your role in your child's life is invaluable. With care, love, and support, your child can look forward to a bright and healthy future

Contact Us

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Facility Name/ Contact Information

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