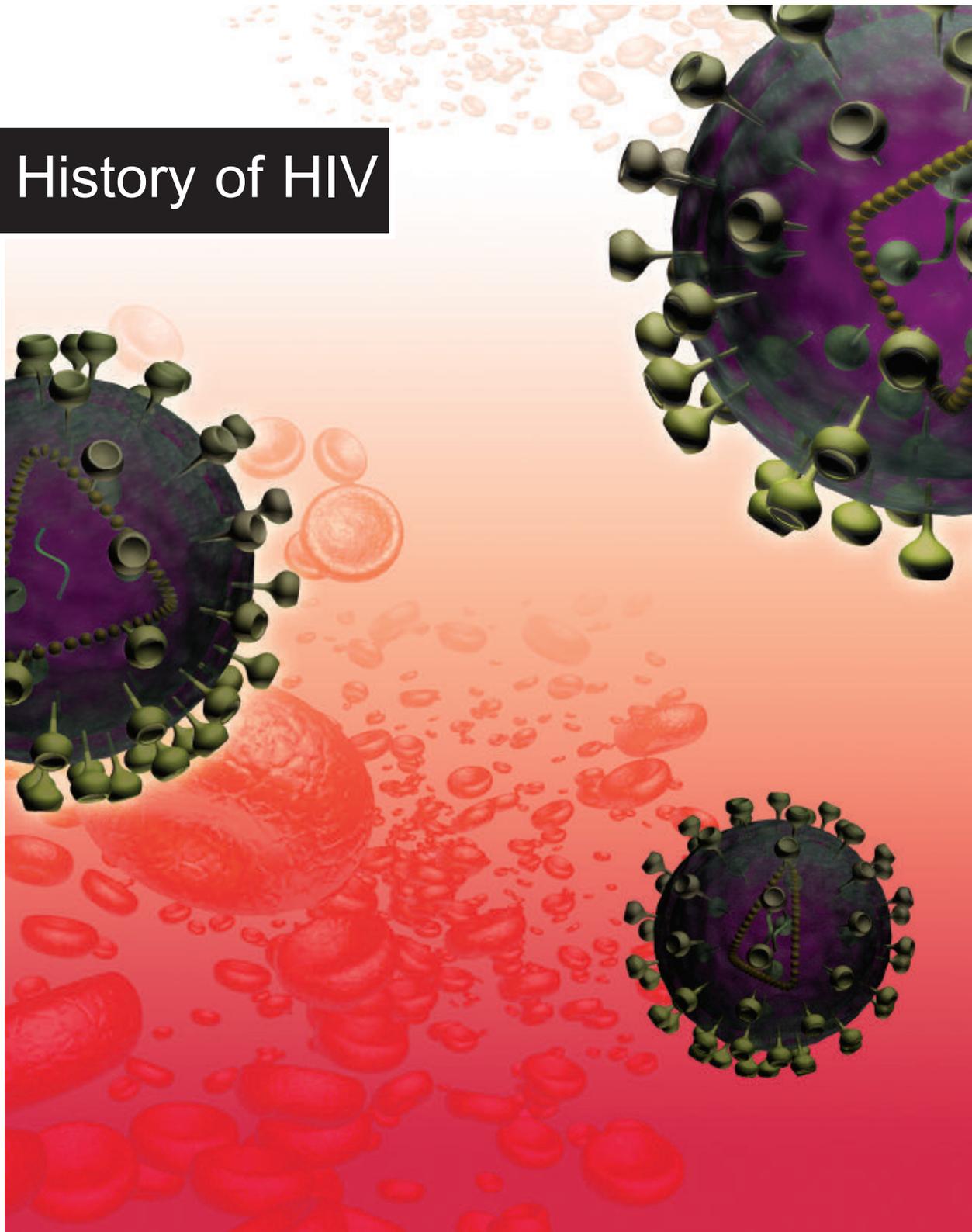
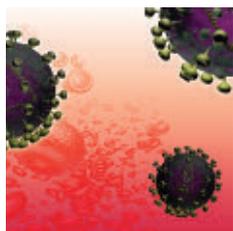


The History of HIV

FUNDACIÓN
LUCÍA

Silvia Cañero





The History of HIV

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FUNDACIÓN LUCÍA

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Today I went to the hospital. After my paediatrician asked me how I felt, she told me she wanted to explain some important things about HIV infection to me.

"Lucía, why do you think you have to come to the hospital so often?"

"I don't know! I only know that I have to take my medication and also come every 3 months for my check-up."

"Do you want me to explain to you what is going on? Look, since you were born you have had a problem with your immune system. Your body has less power to fight against diseases," explained the doctor.

"And this is because you have a virus."

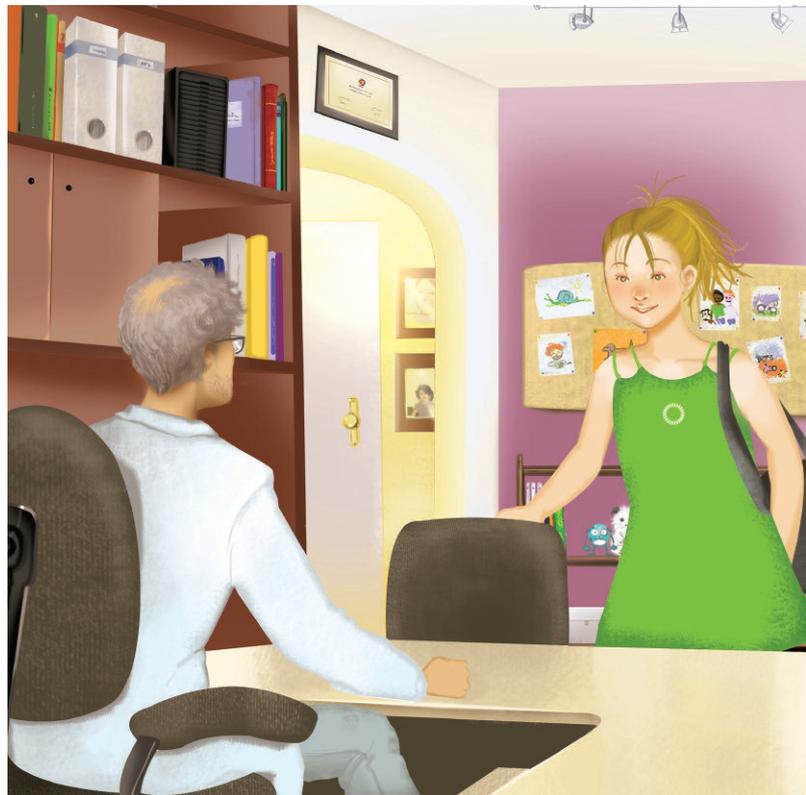
"A virus? What virus?" I asked.

"A virus called HIV, which is the initials of a virus called the HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS". She went on,

"H for human, because it only affects people;

I for immunodeficiency, because it affects people's immune system; and

V for virus."



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"For a long time this virus was unknown, but then we discovered it around 20 years ago. Not a lot of people know much about it, and some people don't know anything about it! We discovered it when people suddenly started to get sick and the doctors didn't know why. The only thing we knew was that they had an infection caused by a micro-organism."

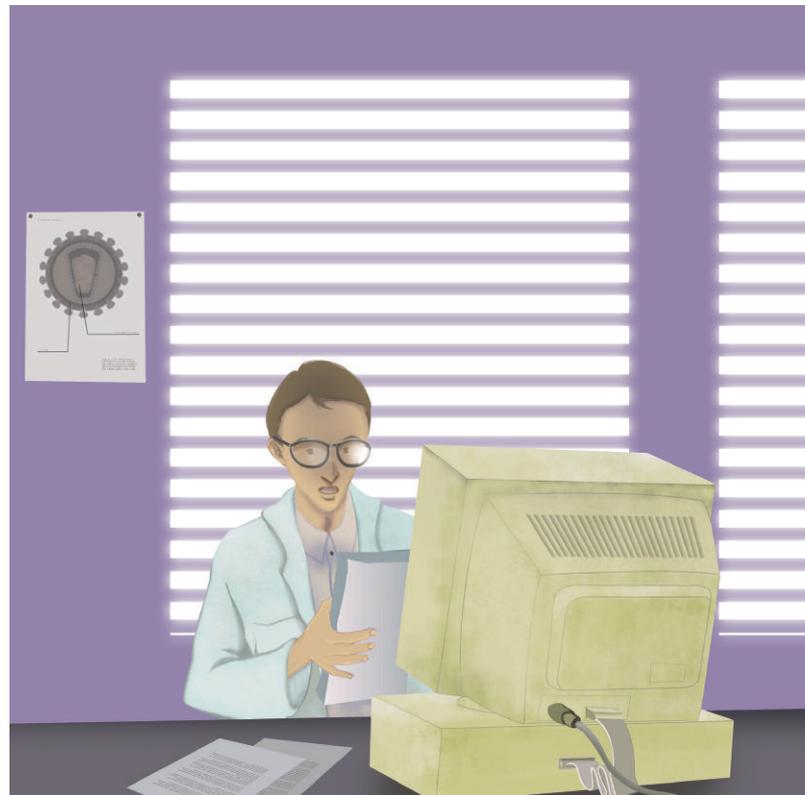


"And how did they figure out what was happening?"

"Dr. Luc Montaigner at the Pasteur Institute in France and Dr. Robert Gallo in the United States discovered that the microbe that caused the infection was a virus, and they called it HIV."

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"Now, I'm starting to understand what has been happening to me since I was a little girl! That's why I have been taking so many pills and why I needed to see the doctor so often!"

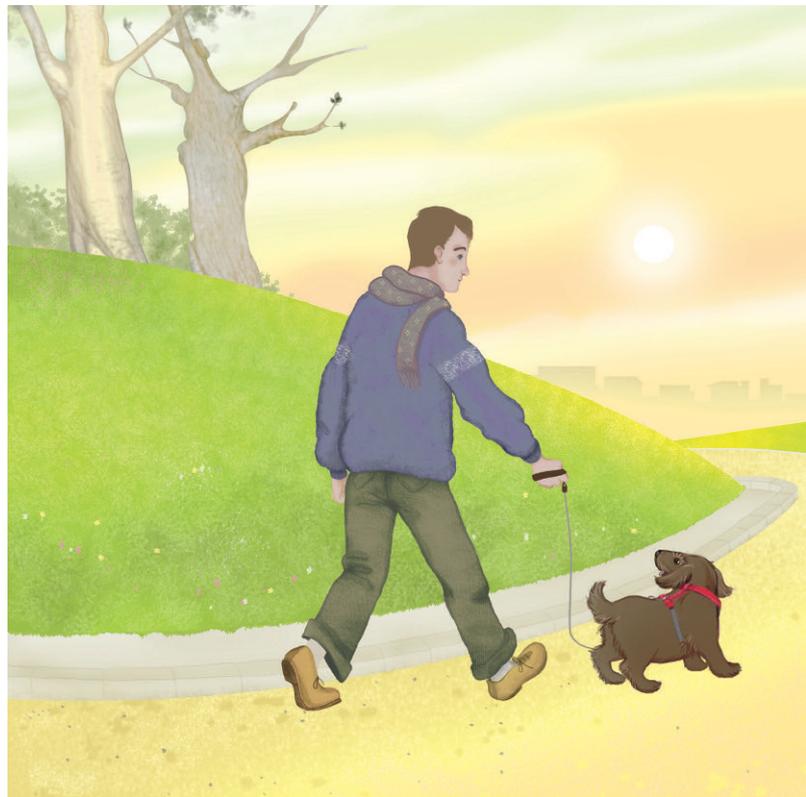


The paediatrician continued explaining. "So the doctors discovered that there were some people with the illness because their immune systems didn't work! That means those people didn't have the cells that defended them against microbes. That's why they all got sick, and in and in some cases died."

8

"But now everything is different, and people with HIV may live a normal life. Do you understand, Lucía?"

I told her yes, but I still wanted to know everything about HIV. I wanted to know exactly how my health was, why I have HIV, and what may happen to me.



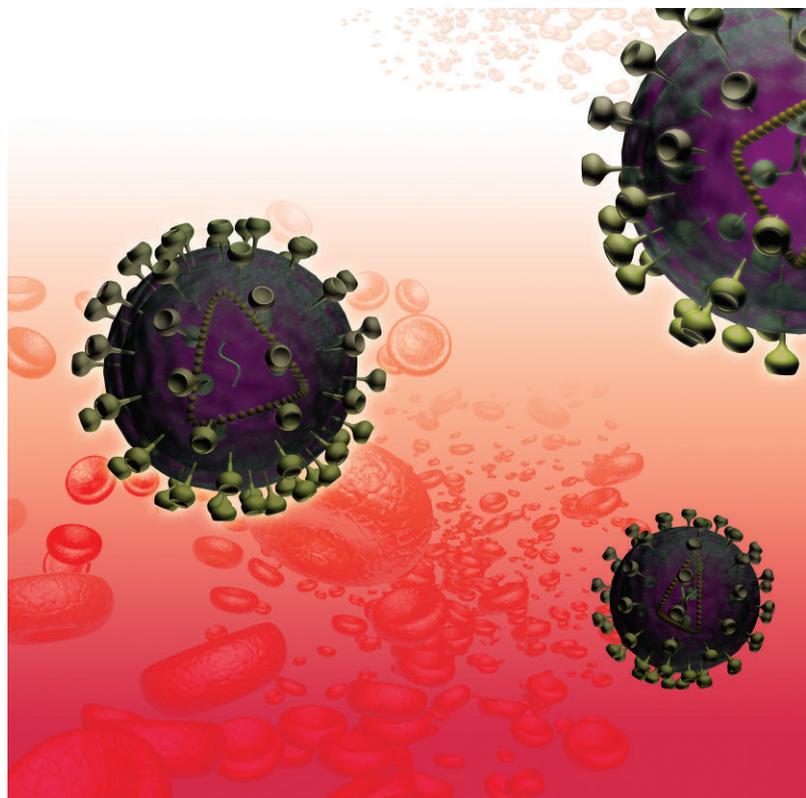
"If we don't stop the virus inside the body, it destroys the immune system, and that's why people get other infections. If there are no defence cells to fight against the micro-organisms, they win, and the disease may cause death."

"But don't worry! Fortunately, we now have special drugs to stop this virus. These drugs don't kill the virus completely, but they don't let it spread either. The medicine stops the virus from multiplying, and that's why the virus can't destroy the immune system. Now, do you see why it is important for you to take all your medicine correctly?."



"In our blood there is a liquid called plasma and there are also cells. Their function is to transport energy (that comes from food) and oxygen (taken from the air we breathe) to all the parts of our body."

- 12 "There are other cells whose job it is to defend our bodies. Imagine that these cells are like little soldiers who are constantly taking care to stop any attacks. If those cells stop working or die, any microbe may get into our body and cause an infection that could make us sick."

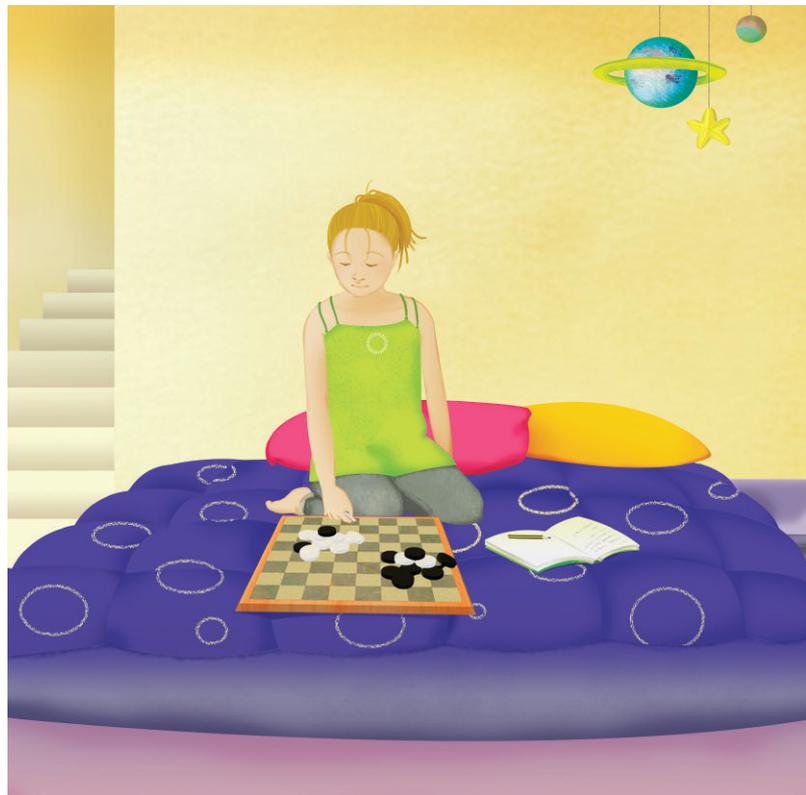


As soon as I arrived home, I went to my room and looked for a sheet of paper and a pencil. I wanted to write down everything that my paediatrician had explained to me, so I wrote:

Infection = microbe inside my body that makes things go wrong. To have an infection means that I have a micro-organism living inside me and making me feel sick.

14 If that happens, we may say that we are infected. If the infection comes from the HIV virus, we may say that person is HIV-positive.

When a person becomes HIV-positive, this means that he or she has too many virus cells and very few defence cells. If a person's defence cells drop under a certain number, it is possible that he or she will get very sick because the immune system isn't working. That's when the virus is called AIDS, which stands for **Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome**.



The word **AIDS** was running through my head, together with other scary words like infection, transmission, infect... wow!
The paediatrician explained very clearly to me that the virus does not infect other people like a flu virus does.

16 You can get a cold just by being close to a person who has it, because when they breathe or cough they may spread the virus around. But the only way to get HIV is if a huge quantity of the virus, coming from an infected person, comes in direct contact with your blood.



Here is the most important part of the entire explanation: How HIV is transmitted.

Transmission takes place through the blood. For someone to get infected, it is necessary for infected blood to enter into his or her body. That is why it is very important when someone gives us an injection that we are sure that no one else has used that needle before, because that needle may or may not have had contact with infected blood.

18 Also, be careful when you get a tattoo or a piercing. Make sure that the needles are new and that it is the first time they have been used. All the items we use for our personal hygiene are just that, personal, and we should not share nail clippers, toothbrushes or razor blades for shaving.

If one day I hurt myself and someone touches my blood, there isn't any risk for that person. It would only be possible to transmit the infection if that person had an open cut and my blood touched their blood. That's why doctors use gloves. As a matter of fact, the virus dies when it is outside of the human body.



Is it possible to transmit HIV through sexual intercourse without a condom?.

The virus is present in men's semen and in women's vaginal fluid, so a condom is like a barrier that stops these liquids from making contact. By using a condom it is possible to avoid an unwanted pregnancy, as well as some infections that are transmitted by sexual intercourse.

If an HIV-positive woman is pregnant, she could possibly transmit the infection to her child if she doesn't go to see the doctor and receive the necessary medicine. That's why it is very important that women who want to have babies now about their health.

Now we know what HIV and AIDS are. We don't have to be afraid about being friends with HIV-positive people. Now we know that for the virus to be transmitted to another person there has to be direct contact between infected and non-infected blood. And that is not very easy to do! There are no risks at all between friends playing, talking or going to school together.

If you have any doubts, you should ask for information. Information is the best way to prevent HIV!.





ACTIVITIES

- 1** Look up the definition of infection in the dictionary.
 - Then write the names of some diseases which are transmitted by infections.
- 2** Write down the differences between the way the flu is transmitted and the way HIV is transmitted.
- 3** Explain how you would feel if someone told you that you were HIV-positive.
- 4** Circle the actions which can transmit VIH:
 - Playing with friends.
 - Sharing clothes.
 - Cleaning a cut without gloves.
 - Brushing your teeth with the toothbrush of an HIV-positive friend.
 - Using the same needles that have been used by someone with HIV (tattoos, injection, piercing, etc.).
 - Giving a kiss.
 - Sharing a pizza.
- 5** Explain what condoms are and why it is good to use them.
- 6** Imagine you are an HIV-positive person and explain what things you would do to stop the infection from spreading in your body.

NOTE FOR TEACHERS

These stories are written to explain to children between 7 and 13 years of age what is known about the HIV infection and AIDS: its origins; how it is thought that new pathogens appeared affecting humans; the transmission channels of this disease; the measures to prevent it, and also its clinical, social and emotional treatments.

These stories do not correspond to the story of the real Lucia who gave her name to the Foundation.

Here are some additional aspects to take into consideration:

- 1** Since some of the topics covered in these stories are difficult for children to understand, we recommend the participation of an adult to lead the reading and clarify and comment on any questions.
- 2** The stories take place here, in Spain. Thanks to access to treatment, the quality of life for infected persons is generally good, but these circumstances are not the same in the rest of the world. There are many countries where HIV infection means certain death in a short time period.
- 3** The treatments described in these stories are the same ones that were available when they were written. But other, more complicated treatments are being developed, and we hope that these treatments will be able to improve current ones.
- 4** One of the main aims of these stories is to diminish the social stigma surrounding the disease and the people infected with it via an objective approach based on information.
- 5** All stories were written to give answers and work on different questions when children ask to talk about these topics.

This material was developed to support adults when they talk with children about HIV infection. For children in general, the material is a basic tool of information and knowledge towards preventing infection. For affected children, there are stories that can be read before their own diagnosis or a family member's diagnosis is known: the second story, "How Does My Body Work?", the fourth story, "Visiting the Hospital", the fifth story, "Trusting and Sharing" and they sixth story, "A Normal Day". All these stories are very useful for answering questions that children may ask when the topic is discussed with freedom.
- 6** All stories contain a minimum of 5 exercises for afterthought and consolidating knowledge.

1 The Family

We all have a family and a history.

2 How Does My Body Work?

Anatomical and physiological concepts necessary to better understand how to take care of our health and practice good prevention.

3 The History of HIV

This story goes over the origins of this new infection, the discovery of the pathogen that causes it and its transmission channels.

4 Visiting the Hospital

To have a good understanding of our health, it is necessary that we have periodic check-ups.

5 Trusting and Sharing

Due to social rejection, infected people have a right to intimacy in order to avoid discrimination and mistreatment. It is important to mention that if this is taken to the extreme, it can cause loneliness, because we all need each other and need to relate with one another. In life it is always important to evaluate with whom you can and want to share your secrets.

6 A Normal Day

The daily activities of a child who takes medication are different, and like all children they sometimes have more needs than adults do.

7 My Friends at the Hospital

The lives of people who are infected with HIV are affected by many realities, all of which have been taken into consideration here.

8 Medication

This story explains drug mechanisms to hinder the progression of the disease, as well as the need to use different types of drugs.

9 The Future

A future with hope is life's bond. This story explains how infected children make their plans for the future, as well as the most common questions they ask.

10 Children's Rights

This section is on the vulnerability of children and young people, and their rights.

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