

The Future

FUNDACIÓN
LUCÍA

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Today we will make some predictions and imagine how the future will be.

Now I'm Lucía the fortune-teller! Let's all of us imagine how we will be as adults I'll do it too! Thinking about my future, I imagine... I imagine... that I'm going to grow up and be a pretty young lady, and I'm going to go to the university. Actually, I'm not sure what I want to study there... but I want to go. Sometimes I think I want to be an architect or maybe a shop assistant: it would be great spending all day wrapping gifts! Or maybe a painter, or maybe...

Anyway, I have time to decide. What I know for sure is that I want to be prepared to do the things I enjoy the most and be a happy person.



I imagine I will have a boyfriend, or maybe a husband, and we will love each other very much and have babies: boys or girls, or maybe one of each, but no more than two! Because everybody knows that children give a lot of satisfaction but are a lot of work... Well, at least that is what all the parents say; my mom included.



When I think about this, a lot of questions come into my head. There are some things that are quite complicated to understand.

- 6 My parents and the doctor explained to me that I have HIV and that when you are infected with the virus it gets into your defence cells, which are mostly present in the blood, but also in semen and vaginal fluids.



It is VERY, VERY IMPORTANT to avoid any contact between your blood and other people's blood. For example, at home it is very important not to use another person's toothbrush, nor their nail clippers or razor blades. I mean, all those things could get a little bit of blood on them. If each one uses his or her personal cleaning kit, then there is no risk of transmitting the infection. You have to be careful if you want to get a tattoo or piercing; you have to choose a place that uses sterile instruments, such as needles (sterile means without germs). For example, at the hospitals all the medical material such as syringes and needles are disposable. That means that you can only use them one time, and throw them away.

Also, before any blood transfusion or organ transplant, the doctors make sure that the blood or organ doesn't contain any virus which could infect the person who is going to receive it.



During sexual intercourse it is important to always use a condom. But then I think, if some day I want to have a baby, how am I going to get pregnant if my husband uses condoms?

10 I immediately called my paediatrician Luis, and then went to the hospital so he could explain it to me.

He told me, "Look Lucía, there are a different procedures if you are a boy or girl with HIV and you want to have babies."

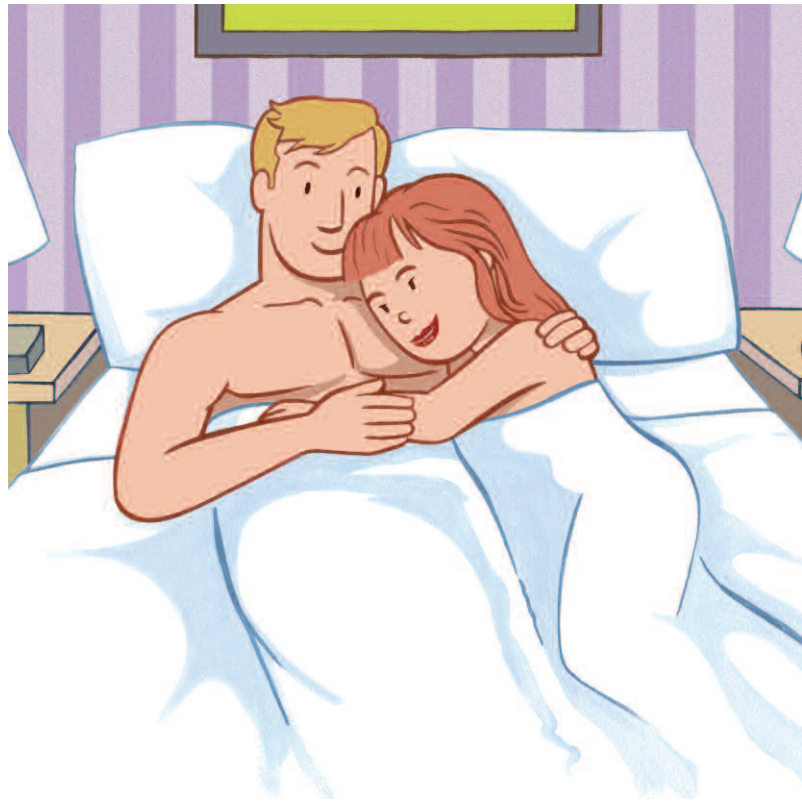


In order to conceive a child, a spermatozoid and an ovule need to join together. That union may happen during sexual intercourse but there is another way: through artificial insemination.

For example, if we are talking about a couple in which the man is the one who is infected, then he needs to give some semen at the hospital. At the hospital laboratory, the doctors clean this semen and eliminate all the viruses it may contain. After that they will put the 'clean semen' into his girlfriend's womb, so she will get pregnant without the risk of either her or the baby getting infected.



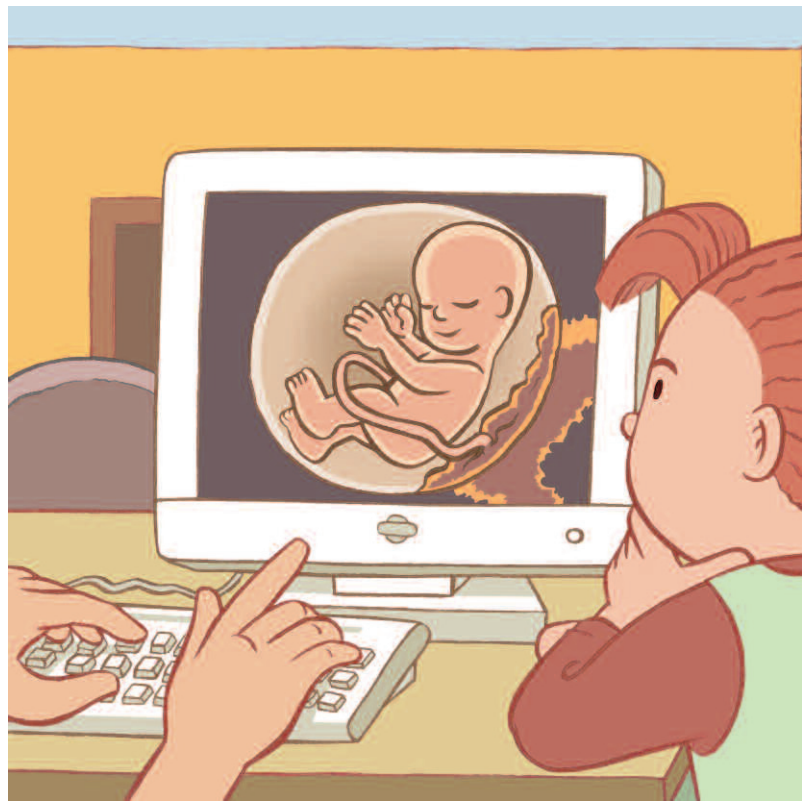
If the girl is the one who is infected, she would use a condom during all her sexual relations. This way she cannot transmit the infection to her boyfriend. If both are infected, they have to use a condom too. There are also some easy insemination techniques to aid conception and begin the pregnancy. Sometimes it is not even necessary to go to the hospital.



But the baby is going to be inside of the mom during 9 months. Throughout this time, she will feed the baby through the umbilical cord and the placenta. Therefore, she could transmit the virus to the baby during these months or at the moment of birth.

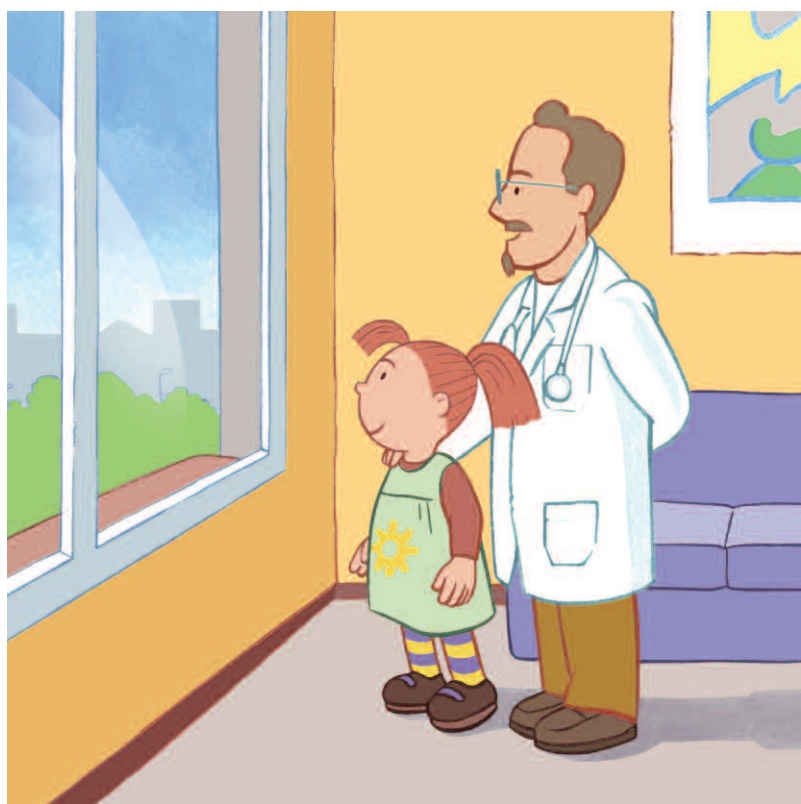
Nowadays, with some medication it is possible not to have too much active virus in the blood, thereby making it possible to have a baby without the HIV virus. That's why it is very important that moms take care of their health before and during pregnancy.

Moms with HIV cannot breast-feed their babies because there is some risk of infection.



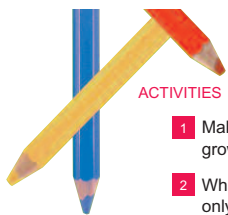
I'm so happy that these days if you are infected with HIV, you can still have children. I really want to be a mom; a good one, someday!

18 When you decide to be a mom, we will surely have even more medical options to choose from. So when you start thinking about that, ask your doctor and you will be able to have beautiful babies.



20 Well, actually there is something else I wish for in the future. I hope that someday the doctors find a medication that kills the virus and cures us, and after taking this medicine we won't have to take anymore. Then no one else will have to suffer from HIV again.





ACTIVITIES

- 1 Make a list of what you want to be when you grow up.
- 2 What are the personal hygiene items that are only for you and that you can't share?
- 3 If you going to get a piercing, what do you have to know about the tools they use in order not to get HIV?
- 4 After reading this story, do you think it is possible to have HIV and have children without them getting HIV too?
- 5 What would you have to do if you wanted to have a baby and your partner was infected with HIV?
- 6 Explain why a mom infected with HIV cannot breast-feed her baby.
- 7 Imagine your own future, just like Lucia did. Briefly explain it.

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 the 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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