



HIV/AIDS and Mother-to-Child Transmission

A woman infected with HIV can pass the virus to her child during pregnancy, labor and delivery, or breastfeeding. Mother-to-child (perinatal) transmission is the most common route of HIV infection in children and is now the source of almost all AIDS cases in children 13 years of age and under in the U.S.¹

Perinatal transmission accounts for 91% of all AIDS cases among children under the age of 13 in the U.S.² Of the perinatally infected persons living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2005, an estimated 20% were Hispanic/Latino.³ Therefore, perinatal transmission can be said to disproportionately affect Hispanic/Latino communities in the U.S.

Despite the wide availability of anti-retroviral treatment, which helps protect a child from infection, perinatal transmission continues to occur at a disproportionate rate within Hispanic/Latino communities because of two reasons: 1) many pregnant Latinas who are infected with HIV may not know their status; and 2) pregnant Latinas who know of their HIV-positive status may not receive appropriate prenatal care and HIV treatment.

Even if a mother is HIV positive, her child can be HIV negative at birth!

Latinas who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy can protect their own health as well as their baby's health by getting tested for HIV. The main factor acting as a barrier to the prevention of perinatal HIV transmission is lack of awareness of HIV status

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Mother-to-Child (Perinatal) HIV Transmission and Prevention". Atlanta: Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007. <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/perinatal/resources/factsheets/perinatal.htm#2>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "One Test. Two Lives". Atlanta: Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/perinatal/1test2lives/>
3. CDC. HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, 2005. Vol. 17 <<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/reports/2005report/default.htm>> . Rev. ed. Atlanta: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2007:1-54.

Reported cases of HIV/AIDS in infants born to HIV-infected mothers, by year of report and selected characteristics, 1994–2006—25 states with confidential name-based HIV infection reporting (not including dependent areas) ⁹

Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Child's race/ethnicity														
White	76	72	45	25	27	20	12	17	20	15	10	15	12	366
Black	212	204	160	124	94	77	79	87	66	63	61	67	51	1,345
Hispanic	32	20	19	14	10	10	15	13	18	9	15	18	8	201
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	2	10
American Indian/Alaska Native	5	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	13

among pregnant women. In 2006, approximately 25 % of all people infected with HIV do not know their HIV status.⁴ Consequently, many women who become pregnant do not know they are infected with HIV and thus put their child at risk for infection. When a pregnant woman learns she is HIV positive, medical professionals can provide medical care and treatment that almost eliminate the risk of HIV transmission to the child. In order to take action to prevent HIV infection in newborns, the CDC and US Public Health Service have recently made public recommendations for all pregnant women to be tested for HIV in healthcare settings.⁵

Improving access to quality perinatal care and HIV treatment among pregnant Latinas is critical for reducing the number of HIV/AIDS cases among Hispanic/Latino children in the U.S. When a pregnant and HIV positive mother adheres to antiretroviral therapy during pregnancy, the risk of mother-to-child transmission can be dramatically reduced to less than 2%.⁶ Without treatment, the transmission rate is approximately 25%.⁷

In addition, a single dose of HIV medication near the time of birth can largely eliminate the risk of perinatal infection. Studies have found that a single dose of nevirapine given to the mother at the onset of labor and to the baby after delivery roughly halved the rate of HIV transmission.⁸

Latinas across the U.S. have the potential to unite and act as advocates to raise awareness about the need for pregnant Latinas to be tested early for HIV and to make treatment options for HIV infected women during pregnancy more readily available.

4. Marks G, Crepaz N, Janssen RS. "Estimating sexual transmission of HIV from persons aware and unaware that they are infected with the virus in the USA". *AIDS* 2006;20(10):1447–1450.

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Mother-to-Child (Perinatal) HIV Transmission and Prevention". Atlanta: Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007. <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/perinatal/resources/factsheets/perinatal.htm#2>

6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "One Test. Two Lives". Atlanta: Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/perinatal/1test2lives/>

7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "One Test. Two Lives". Atlanta: Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/perinatal/1test2lives/>

8. 'Reduction of maternal-infant transmission of human immunodeficiency virus type 1 with zidovudine treatment. Pediatric AIDS Clinical Trials Group Protocol 076 Study Group', Connor et al, *NEJM* 331(18), 3 November 1994

9. Centers for Disease Control. "Surveillance Report, 2006". Atlanta, GA: Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008. <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/reports/2006report/pdf/2006SurveillanceReport.pdf> <<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/reports/2006report/pdf/2006SurveillanceReport.pdf>> Note. Since 1994, the following 25 states have had laws and regulations requiring confidential name-based HIV infection reporting: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.