

How do I protect my child from getting HIV?

Client Education Cards for Mentor Mothers:
The Kenya Mentor Mother Program



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Prevention of Mother to
Child Transmission of HIV

Welcome to the Kenya Mentor Mother Program



Welcome to the Kenya Mentor Mother Program

Hello and welcome to the Kenya Mentor Mother Program.

I am a Mentor Mother and my role is to provide peer education and psychosocial support to pregnant women, new mothers and their partners. I will be walking you through some important steps that you need to take to ensure that you get a healthy baby free of HIV.

Today, we will talk about several important topics:



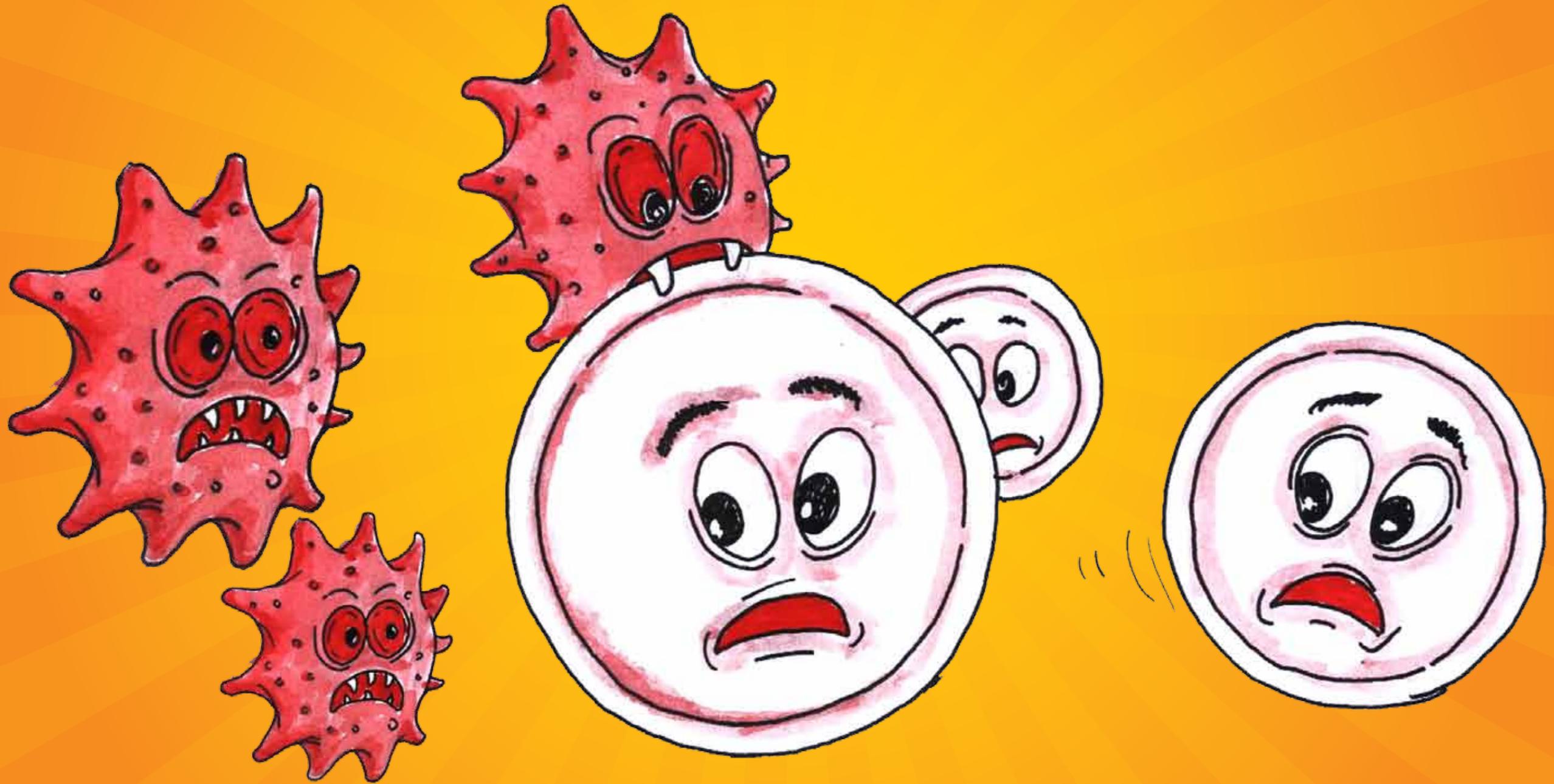
HIV & pregnancy

Today, we will talk about several important topics

1. What is HIV?
2. How is HIV passed from mother to baby?
3. Why is it important for an expectant woman to take an HIV test?
4. Why should my sexual partner be also tested for HIV with me?
5. What happens if I am HIV negative?
6. What happens if I am HIV positive?
7. If I test positive, what do I need to do to protect my baby from HIV?
8. What happens if one of us tests HIV positive and other one HIV negative?
9. Why should I be screened for Sexually Transmitted Infections?
10. What is the best feeding option for my baby?



1 | What is HIV?



1. What is HIV?

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. Looking at this picture, what do you know about how HIV works in the body?

HIV is:

- An infection that attacks the body's immune system.
- When the immune system becomes weak, the body can no longer defend itself against diseases.
- Over time, HIV continues to attack the immune system. When the immune system becomes very weak, a person may be diagnosed with AIDS.
- With the right medicines, people with HIV can maintain their health and live longer. There is no cure for HIV.

Key Message:

It is important for every expectant woman to know her HIV status. If an expectant woman has HIV and does not take the necessary precautions, the virus can be passed to the baby.

There are important steps that can be taken by the mother and father to protect the unborn child from getting HIV.



2 | How is HIV passed from mother to baby?



2. How is HIV passed from mother to baby?

What do you know about how HIV is passed from mother to baby?
What do you see in these pictures?

An HIV-positive pregnant women can pass HIV to her baby at three points:

- During pregnancy
- During labour and delivery
- And after the baby is born, through breastfeeding.

Key message:

HIV can be passed from mother to baby. Your healthcare provider can help you take steps to protect the baby from HIV infection.



3 | Why is it important for an expectant woman to take an HIV test?



3. Why is it important for an expectant woman to take an HIV test?

An HIV test is the only sure way to know your HIV status. When you know your status, you can make good choices for yourself, the baby and your family.

If you test HIV positive...

You will be given medication called ARVs. When taken properly, ARVs lower the chance of passing HIV to your baby. After delivery, the baby will also receive ARVs. You will be referred to health facility where you can get treatment, care and support for your family.

If you test HIV negative...

You will discuss strategies for maintaining good health for you and your baby, including strategies for how to remain HIV free.

HIV testing is...

- Private and confidential—only the health care workers caring for you will know your HIV status.
- Voluntary—you decide whether you want to test for HIV or not. HIV testing is encouraged, since your status can help you protect your baby.
- Encouraged for both partners in a couple. Either test together or discuss your results. This can help you both to protect your own health and make smart decisions for your baby.

Key message:

Getting an HIV test is the first step toward protecting your baby from HIV.



4 | Why should my sexual partner also be tested for HIV with me?



4. Why should my sexual partner also be tested for HIV with me?

It is very important for your sexual partner to get tested for HIV.

- Sometimes, couples do not have the same HIV status - one person is negative while the other is positive. This is called "discordance."
- Getting HIV while you are pregnant or breastfeeding increases the risk that the baby will also become infected with HIV.
- Within a discordant couple, the HIV-negative partner is not immune to HIV - he or she could become infected at any time.
- If you do not test together, be sure to discuss your status with your partner and encourage him to also go for a test.

Key message:

Testing as a couple helps you both to make the right decisions for your baby. Within a discordant couple, it is not possible to know when HIV will be passed, but every time you have sex with an HIV positive person, there is a chance that you could get infected.



5 | What happens if I test HIV negative?

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5. What happens if I test HIV negative?

HIV tests are very reliable. If your test result is negative, that means there are no signs of HIV in your blood. It takes time for these signs of HIV to appear in your blood. If you may have been exposed to HIV very recently, it is a good idea to test again after 6 weeks to be sure of your status.

Talking to your partner:

- Both of you should be tested for HIV.
- If you and your partner are both HIV negative, protect each other from HIV by being faithful.
- If you are unsure about your partner's HIV status, protect yourself and your baby by using condoms every time you have sex.

Key message:

Testing HIV-negative means that there are no signs of HIV in your blood. Take steps to ensure that you remain negative. Talk to your partner and use condoms.



6 | What happens if I test positive?



6. What happens if I test positive?

If your HIV test result is positive, it means you are living with HIV. With the right care, you can stay strong and have a healthy baby. The healthcare provider will discuss ways that you can protect your baby. He or she will also suggest care and support services for your family.

Disclosing your status:

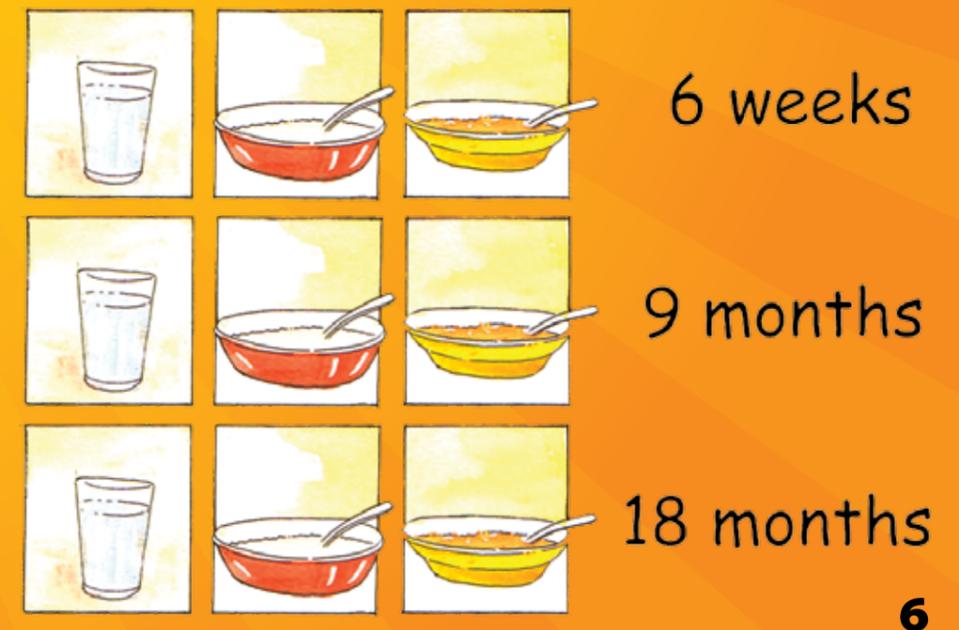
- It is important to tell someone you trust that you are HIV- positive. You need emotional and physical support from loved ones. They can also support you as you begin to take medication and ensure that you visit the clinic regularly.
- Your partner also needs to know your status. Disclosure makes it possible to discuss important issues, including:
 - Practicing safer sex
 - Choosing an infant feeding option
 - Planning future pregnancies.

Key message:

Knowing you are HIV-positive may be difficult at first; but knowing your status is an important first step. Healthcare workers will share important information on how to keep your baby and family healthy, and Mentor Mothers are here to support you in this journey.



7 | If I test positive, how can I protect my baby from HIV?



7. If I test positive, how can I protect my baby from HIV?

Looking at the pictures, what can you do to protect your baby if you are HIV positive?

1. Start taking ARVs while you are pregnant
2. Deliver your baby in a health facility to ensure that the labor and delivery procedures are safe for you and your baby (These procedures are not available if you deliver your baby at home).
3. Give the baby medication (ARVs) soon after delivery. This helps protect the baby from HIV.
4. Discuss with the best way to feed your baby with your doctor. Exclusively breastfeeding for the first 6 months with ARVs is recommended and wean the baby thereafter gradually; replacement feeding with infant formula is an alternative if you meet a certain criteria as assessed by your doctor.
5. Visit the clinic regularly so that healthcare workers can monitor yours and the baby's health. Remember that you and the baby need to take your medication as prescribed by the doctor.
6. Babies born to women living with HIV need to be tested for HIV at 6 weeks, 9 months and 18 months.

Key message:

If you are HIV positive, it does not mean that your baby will also have HIV. With ARVs and the right care, the chances of your baby getting HIV can be lowered.



8 | What happens if one of us tests HIV positive and other one HIV negative?



8. What happens if one of us tests HIV positive and other one HIV negative?

When one partner is HIV positive and the other is HIV negative, this is called “discordance.” The only way to know if you are in a discordant couple is for both of you to test for HIV.

Look at the picture—what do you see?

- The first couple is discordant—the man is negative, the woman is positive
- The second couple is also discordant—the man is positive, the woman is negative
- The last two couples are not discordant—they both have the same HIV status: negative and positive.

Discordant couples need to protect their baby from HIV:

- The positive partner will need to start treatment
- The couple should use a condom every time they have sex to ensure that the negative partner does not become infected—this is particularly important during pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Start discussing the health of your baby now. When you visit the clinic, bring your questions to the healthcare provider.

Key message:

Talk about HIV with your partner and know each other’s HIV status.



9 | Why should I be screened for STIs?



9. Why should I be screened for STIs?

STI stands for sexually transmitted infection. STIs can increase the health risks for your baby. Both you and your sexual partner should be tested for STIs. It is important to know if you have an STI because:

- STIs can be treated to improve your health and help you have a safer delivery and a healthy baby.
- If one person has an STI, both partners need to be treated. This helps ensure that the infection does not continue to be passed between the couple.
- During pregnancy, it is important to avoid getting infected with a new STI.

Prevent STIs by:

- Abstaining from sex
- Test for STIs with your partner and be faithful
- Use condoms every time you have sex

Key message:

Preventing and treating STIs during pregnancy is very important to ensure a healthy pregnancy for you and your baby.



10 | What is the best feeding option for my baby?



10. What is the best feeding option for my baby?

What is the best feeding option for my baby?

If you are HIV negative or don't know your HIV status it is very important that you exclusively breastfeed your baby for 6 months and continue breastfeeding with introduction of appropriate complementary feeds thereafter.

If you are HIV positive you should exclusively breastfeed your child for the first 6 months and continue breastfeeding (up to 1 year) once you introduce your baby to other appropriate complementary feeds. You should continue giving your baby ARVs for the duration of breastfeeding.

If you are HIV positive and decide not to breastfeed your child, you should discuss with your doctor on replacement formula feeding for the first 6 months followed by introduction of complementary feeding thereafter. If you agree with the doctor to give your baby formula, you should give your baby ARVs for the first 6 weeks. Mixed feeding for a baby less than 6 months is dangerous and should be avoided. It causes increased HIV exposure and increases the risk of HIV transmission up to 10 times.

Key message:

It is dangerous to give the baby other foods (even water) during the first 6 months. Choose breast milk (or formula) **EXCLUSIVELY** and give the baby nothing else. When other foods are given alongside breast milk or formula, your baby's risk for getting HIV is greatly increased.



11 | Summary: key steps I can take to keep my baby, family and myself healthy



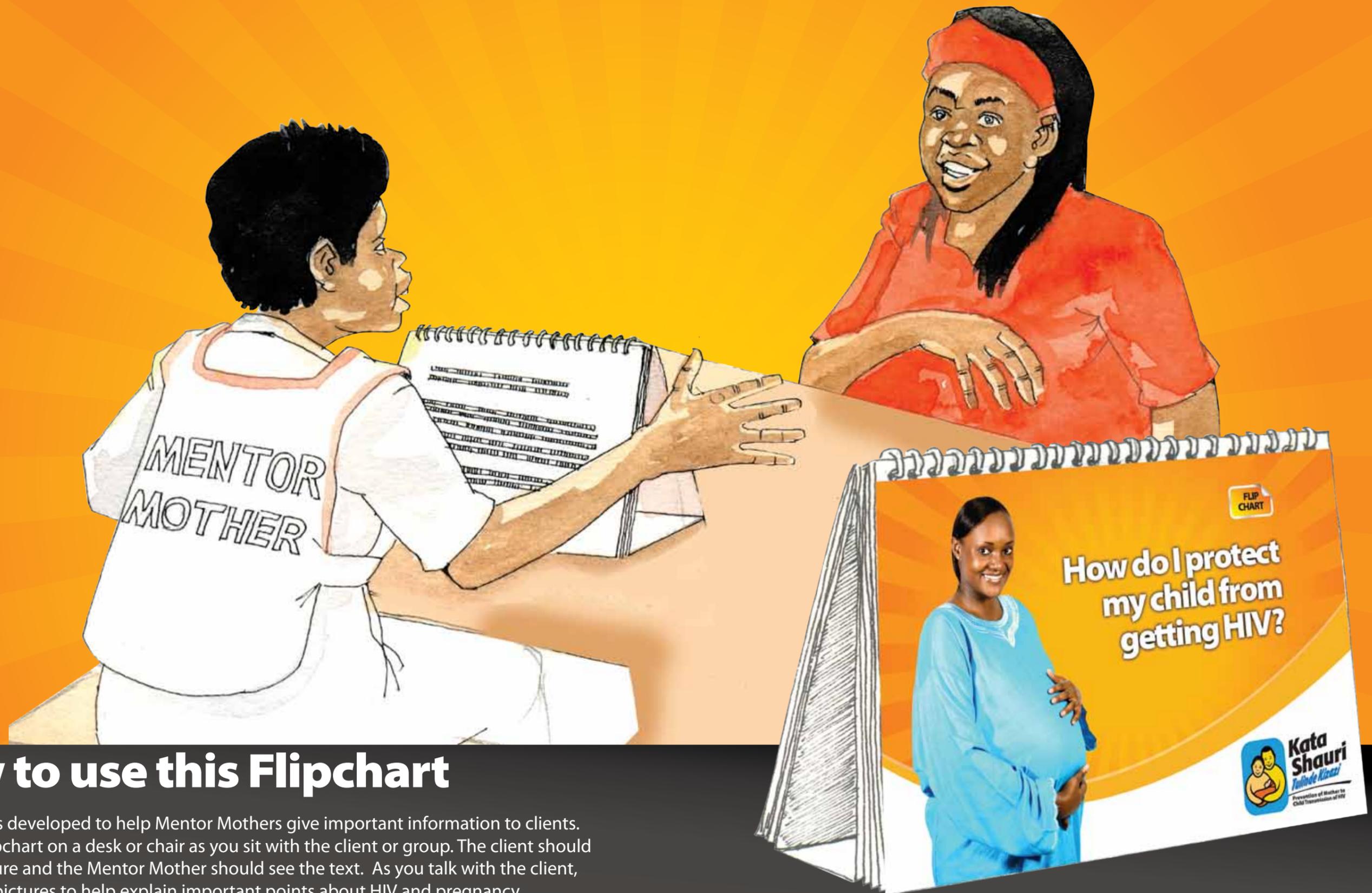
11. Summary: key steps I can take to keep my baby, family and myself healthy

It is important to protect the health of your family.

Remember these key steps:

1. Get tested for HIV with your sexual partner
2. If positive, take the medication as directed by the doctor and use condoms to prevent sharing HIV.
3. Deliver your baby in a health facility
4. Feed your baby breast milk only for the first six months.
5. Give your baby ARV medication for as long as you breastfeed
6. Discuss family planning with your healthcare provider. If you are HIV positive, the provider can guide you on the best time to conceive.
7. Keep all clinic appointments to ensure that your baby, family and yourself stay healthy.





How to use this Flipchart

This tool was developed to help Mentor Mothers give important information to clients. Place the flipchart on a desk or chair as you sit with the client or group. The client should see the picture and the Mentor Mother should see the text. As you talk with the client, refer to the pictures to help explain important points about HIV and pregnancy. When you need to, refer to the text to ensure that you have covered all of the key points.

This flipchart should support the conversation you are having with the client. Encourage the client to ask questions and be involved in the session.

