

1. PREVENTION AND CARE OF HIV INFECTION

The main mode of transmission of HIV infection is sexual intercourse and hence sexual behaviour modification plays a key role in reducing transmission. However, the pandemic of HIV infection continues to grow despite nationwide efforts to increase awareness of the infectious nature of the infection and ways to prevent transmission of infection. A number of social, behavioural and biological factors, shown in Table 1.1, are responsible for perpetuating the epidemic.

Table 1.1: Factors responsible for driving the epidemic of HIV infection
Social and behavioural factors:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequent partner change amongst the adult population ▪ Overlapping sexual partnerships – as opposed to serial monogamous relationships ▪ Engaging in commercial sex ▪ Separation of marital partners that occurs as a result of moving back and forth between home and distant workplaces ▪ Use of alcohol in public places ▪ Sex across age groups; older men having sex with young women and girls ▪ Women's economic dependence on marriage ▪ Poverty ▪ Unwillingness to use condoms consistently ▪ Cultural practices, such as, wife inheritance
Biological factors:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High rates of sexually transmitted infections in communities where HIV is prevalent ▪ Low rates of male circumcision ▪ Women, especially women and girls, are at greater risk for infection when compared to men ▪ Prevalence of more virulent strains of HIV, such as clade C, in the southern Africa Region

People living with HIV infection and AIDS (PLHA) need clinical care and support, as well as social support including, housing, food and education for themselves and their dependents, job security, psychological support to

cope with a life-threatening condition, confidentiality and protection against discrimination and stigmatization.

The main burden of disease in persons with HIV infection is related to a number of common infections, such as, tuberculosis, pneumonia, diarrhoeal diseases and oropharyngeal thrush. PLHA should have easy access to care and the following care-related activities should be available nationwide:

- Treatment of common HIV-related infections including, pneumonia, diarrhoeal diseases, candidiasis, TB, herpes simplex virus infections, varicella zoster virus infections and other fungal infections
- Prophylaxis against opportunistic infections
- Access to high quality primary and reproductive health care
- Access to STI care
- Detection and treatment of HIV-related opportunistic infections
- Detection and treatment of HIV-related cancers including Kaposi's sarcoma, lymphoma, cervical cancer
- Detection and treatment of neurological problems and mental illnesses complicating HIV infection
- Highly active antiretroviral therapy
- Psychological support and counseling

Table 1.2 summarises primary prevention strategies and activities that have been demonstrated to work.

Table 1.2: HIV Primary Prevention Strategies and Activities	
Strategies	Activities
Public health education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inform and educate the public about the nature of HIV and other STIs including danger of infection, complications, modes of transmission, methods of prevention and treatment ▪ Counter myths about HIV infection and its transmission
Promote safer sexual behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delay sexual debut until one has found one's lifelong mutually faithful partner

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educate and empower adolescents, especially girls, to avoid sex with high-risk older partners ▪ Have sex only with one's lifelong mutually faithful partner ▪ Avoid situations that may promote casual sexual liaisons
Promote safer sexual activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abstain from sexual activity altogether ▪ Use condoms if engaging in casual sex ▪ Use condoms correctly and consistently ▪ Engage in non-penetrative sexual activities ▪ Promote and provide condoms widely
Promote early STI-care seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote good STI-care seeking behaviour ▪ Make STI services accessible and acceptable
Promote voluntary counseling and testing for HIV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowing one's HIV status promotes behaviour change, provided appropriate education and counseling are also offered ▪ Provide accessible and acceptable services for the voluntary testing for HIV ▪ Provide HIV counseling services
Prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide education and counseling to pregnant women and their partners ▪ Implement activities for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV using antiretroviral drugs ▪ Promote appropriate infant feeding practices ▪ Provide appropriate family planning services ▪ Promote appropriate labour and delivery techniques
Adolescent friendly health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education on health and hygiene, sexuality and sexual health ▪ Promoting good health care seeking behaviour ▪ Providing accessible and acceptable adolescent-friendly health services ▪ Providing adolescent-friendly services for reproductive health
Prevent transmission through blood and blood products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote appropriate use of blood and blood products ▪ Provide safe blood supplies and safe blood transfusion practices

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote avoidance of sharing of needles and syringes ▪ Promote avoidance of skin piercing practices ▪ Institute programmes for post-occupational exposure prophylaxis
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In addition the following support activities have been shown to mitigate the impact of HIV infection in PLHA and should be implemented nationwide:

- Psychosocial support for PLHA, their families and carers
- Recognition, establishing and facilitation of community activities supporting PLHA and their families including:
- Legal structures against discrimination and stigma
- Support for orphans including, access to health care and educational needs
- Nutritional advice and support for PLHA and their families
- Public services that reduce the economic and social impact of HIV/AIDS, including social security, legal aid, and matters relating to inheritance