



## HIV/AIDS

The human immunodeficiency virus – or HIV for short – is the name of the virus that causes the condition known as AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). HIV attacks the body's immune system and makes it unable to fight-off certain infections and cancers.

### **How do children get HIV?**

The primary method that children become infected with HIV is through maternal transmission (i.e., the transfer of HIV) from mother-to-child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. If medical treatment is used in combination with obstetric care and an elective caesarian section, transmission is reduced to an only 2% chance of infant transmission.

### **Can HIV be spread in childcare settings?**

No documented cases of HIV infection have been traced to kissing, biting, playing with an infected child, or sharing food, eating utensils, toys or bathroom facilities.

### **Sexual transmission of HIV**

With individuals that are positive, HIV is found in blood, mother's milk, semen and vaginal secretions. HIV transmission as a result of anal, oral, or vaginal intercourse has been well documented. HIV infection can also occur as a result of sexual abuse in children.

### **How is HIV diagnosed?**

For adults rapid HIV tests are available and are used in NH. To confirm a rapid test, people should still receive a blood test. A blood test involves testing for the HIV antibody. However, use of HIV-antibody testing in children less than 18 months old may be confounded by the presence of maternally acquired HIV antibodies. Other laboratory tests such as viral culture,

nucleic acid detection or antigen test are useful in determining HIV infection in these children.

### **What are the symptoms?**

There are a wide range of signs and symptoms seen in HIV-infected children. Symptoms may include failure to thrive, weight loss, fever, mild or severe developmental delay, neurologic deterioration and severe, prolonged or recurrent infections. In general, the interval from HIV infection to the onset of symptoms is shorter in children than adults due to the developing and immature immune system. For this reason, HIV infected women should seek medical care and treatment early on in a pregnancy.

### **Should children with HIV be enrolled in childcare?**

Yes. Studies continue to show **no evidence of transmission** of HIV within the childcare setting. HIV infected children should therefore be enrolled in daycare if their health, neurologic development, behavior and immune status are appropriate. The decision as to whether or not a child with known HIV infection may be enrolled in childcare should be made on a case-by-case basis. The decision is best made by the child's healthcare provider.

### **Reportable?**

Yes, both HIV infection and AIDS are reportable by New Hampshire law to the Division of Public Health Services, Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at (603) 271-4496.