

Protecting yourself from HIV is protecting your unborn child



“Adopt and sustain appropriate behavior regarding prevention and care for HIV/AIDS affected people, including orphans.”



Pan American Health Organization

Regional Office of the
World Health Organization

Family and Community Health/Project of Newborn, Child and Youth Health (FCH/CH)
Family and Community Health/Prevention, Treatment and Care of HIV/STI (FCH/HI)



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It is estimated that more than 90% of children living with HIV

acquired it during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding – forms of transmission that are preventable. Without intervention, the risk of an HIV-positive mother passing the virus on to her child can be as high as 45%, whereas taking antiretroviral drugs and avoiding breastfeeding decreases the risk of transmission to less than 2%. However, the best way for mothers to prevent transmitting HIV to their children is to protect themselves from getting it in the first place.



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Situation of the HIV epidemic in Latin America and the Caribbean

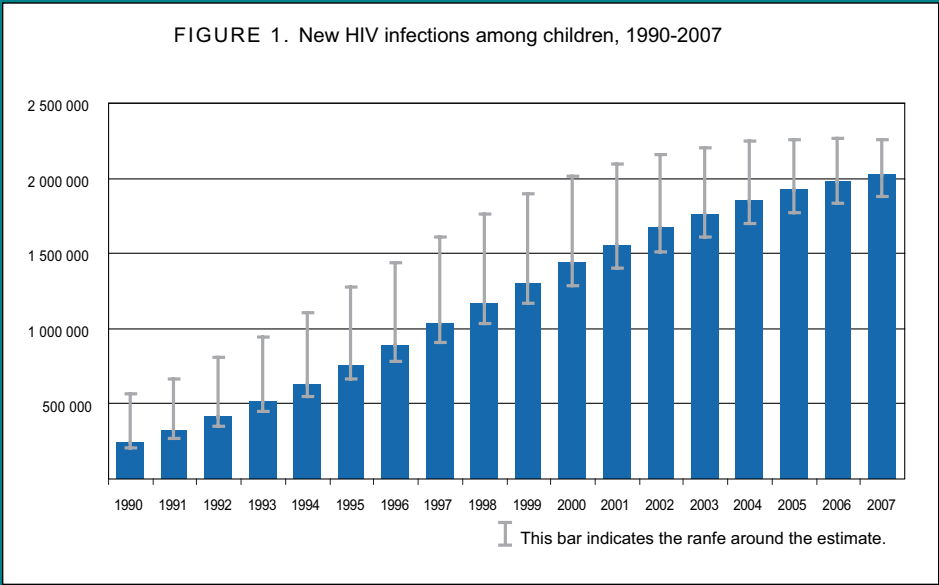


Figure 1
The AIDS epidemic affects adults and children throughout the world. In 2007, it was calculated that 2 million children around the world were infected, of which **55,000** live in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Figure 2
The infection rate of the general population reaches 3% in some areas of the Region. A conservative estimate could put the infection rate among pregnant women at 0.3%; in other words, approximately **one in 300 pregnant women is infected with HIV**.

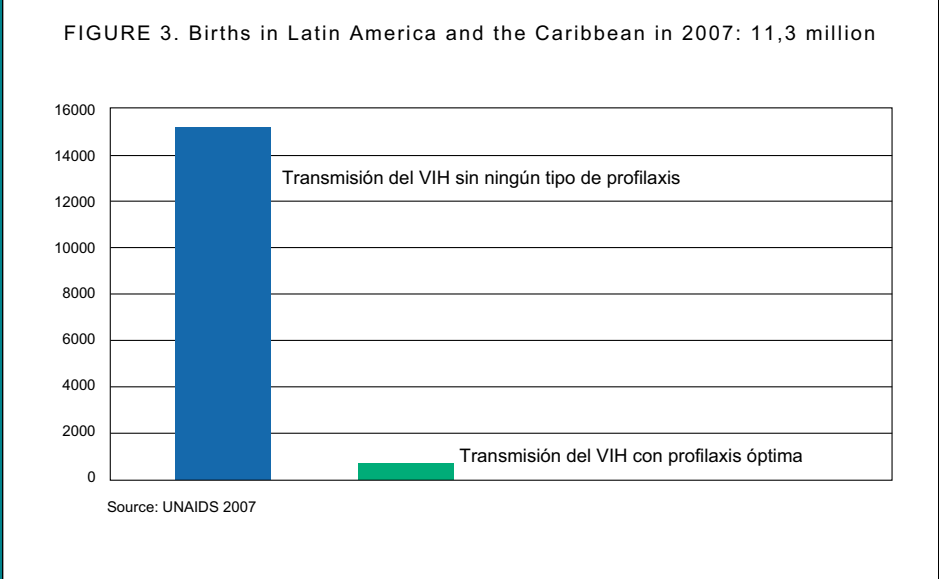
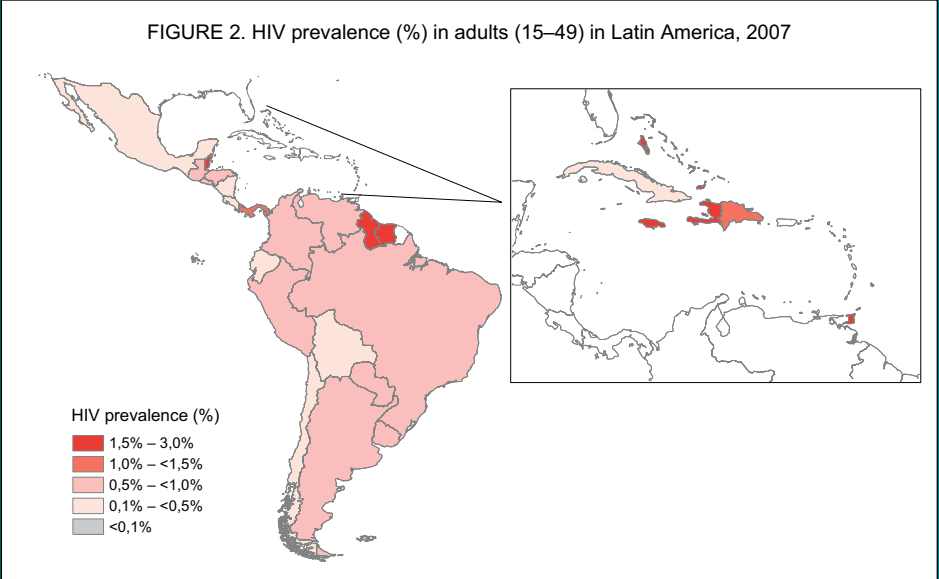


Figure 3
In 2007, 11.3 million children were born in the Region, of which **34,000** are children of mothers living with HIV. Mother-to-child transmission of the virus without any type of intervention can be as high as 45%; in other words, almost half of all children born to mothers living with HIV will become infected with the virus. **By taking the appropriate measures, this number can be reduced to 1 in 100.**

Figure 4
The first step to prevent mother-to-child transmission is knowing if the pregnant mother is infected with the virus. **We have a long way to go before 100% of pregnant women in the Region are tested for HIV.**

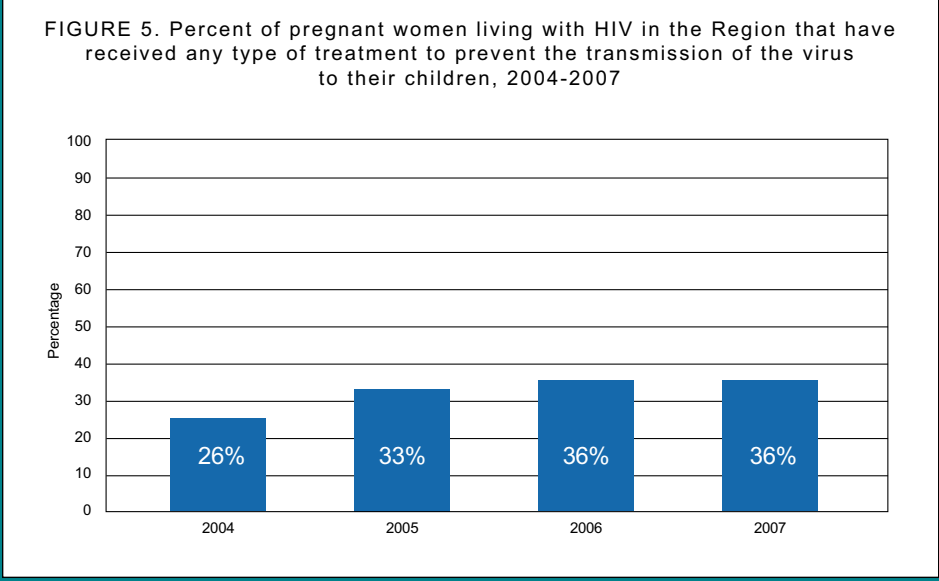
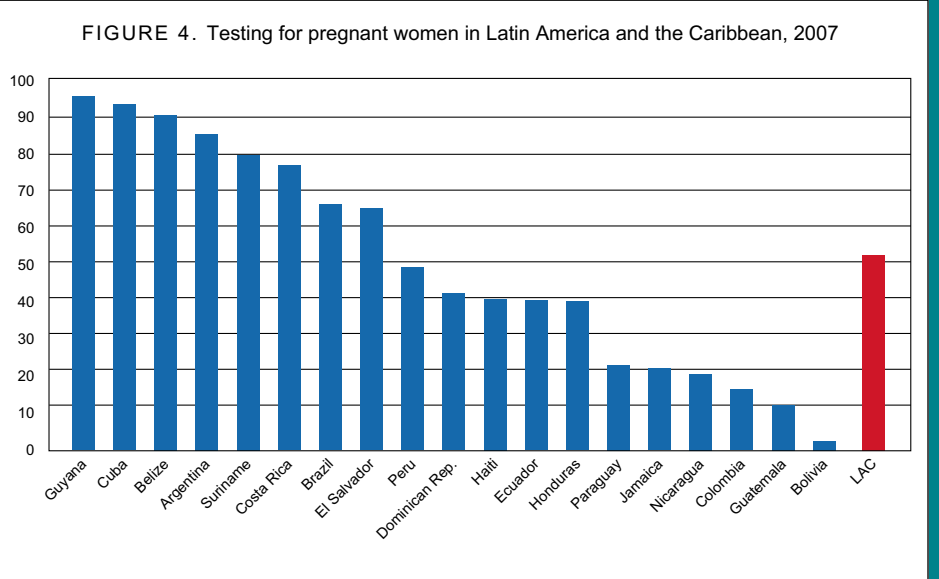


Figure 5
Only 36% of pregnant women living with HIV in the Region received any type of treatment to prevent the transmission of HIV to their children in 2007.

IMCI Integrated Management of Childhood Illness in the framework of maternal, newborn and child care

Practices

Within the community:

- ❖ Talk about HIV/AIDS openly and honestly. Encourage dialogue between generations, especially between grandmothers, mothers and daughters.
- ❖ Provide access to comprehensive sex education.
- ❖ Promote family and community support to pregnant women to ensure that they attend antenatal care services.
- ❖ Empower women to negotiate condom use with their partners.
- ❖ Encourage women to have skilled attendants on hand during their labors and deliveries.
- ❖ Encourage pregnant women to get tested for HIV.

At health care facilities:

- ❖ Ensure antenatal, family planning and sexual reproductive health care services all have voluntary counseling for pregnant women and women of child-bearing age.

- ❖ Ensure the possibility that HIV testing can be done at all health care facilities for 100% of pregnant women.
- ❖ Make condoms available and educate on how to use them.
- ❖ Provide effective treatments for HIV-infected women. Ensure access to treatment schemes to reduce the likelihood of mother-to-child transmission.
- ❖ Provide access to sexual and reproductive health services that are youth-friendly.
- ❖ Promote health-seeking behavior by people of child-bearing age, especially women.
- ❖ Develop interventions to ensure prenatal and sexual health.
- ❖ Ensure births are attended by qualified health personnel.
- ❖ Provide access to technology for the early diagnosis of HIV in newborns and treatments for those that are infected, including breast milk substitutions when necessary.



Syphilis can also be transmitted to unborn babies during pregnancy and labor, but it is easily detected and treated. If it is not treated, it can cause deformations in the baby or make it more susceptible to delayed mental and physical development, pneumonia and anemia. Nearly 12% of newborns infected with the disease will eventually die from it.

The Pan American Health Organization recommends that women get tested for syphilis early in their pregnancies to prevent transmission.