

# PROTECT YOUR FAMILY: COMMUNICATE

## FOR THE LATINO FAMILY



The Latino Families HIV/AIDS Prevention Project



Conducted by:  
National Council of La Raza

Resource ID # 8989  
Protect Your Family: Communicate  
For the Latino Family

## Maria's first love...



Maria was a 14 year old freshman when she met Ricky, a senior and the most popular guy in school. He was the captain of the soccer team and all the girls wanted to go out with him. When Ricky asked her to be his girlfriend, Maria couldn't believe it. After dating for a while, Ricky wanted Maria to prove her love to him. He told her it was time for them to have sex and that she couldn't get pregnant because it was her first time. Even though Ricky told her that all the popular girls were having sex, Maria was really confused. Her friends told her to go ahead and do it, but she was afraid and she wanted to make the right decision. Maria really wanted to talk to her mom, but she just

didn't know how. *"My mom has never talked to me about sex. We don't talk about those things."*

Even though Maria's parents were a little worried about her being so young and having a boyfriend, they had never seen her so happy. When one of Maria's friends suddenly dropped out of school after getting pregnant, Maria's parents started to think that the same thing could happen to her. They knew they needed to talk to her about sex, but they didn't know where to begin. *"Our parents never taught us about sex. It is not talked about in our culture. We want to be different with our children; because we don't want them to make the same mistakes, especially now when the risk is so much greater."*



**ARE YOU READY TO TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT SEX?**





## HOW TO TALK TO YOUR FAMILY ABOUT SEX

One of the strengths of the Latino community is family unity. Working towards better family communication can help prevent problems like infidelity, teen pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS.

Unfortunately, we don't communicate enough with our children about sex. You need to provide your children with the right information. Let them know that they can talk to you about anything and that they can always count on you for advice. Remember that your children often receive false information from friends, and that what they believe could harm them. In order to establish effective family communication, consider the following:

Sex education should begin gradually at a young age.

Teach your children the right name for each body part.


When your children start asking questions about sex, answer them in a clear, correct and simple way.

If you don't have the answer, don't be embarrassed. Tell your children that you'll find the information they need. Ask a professional or someone you trust for correct information.

If your child does not ask questions about sex, take the initiative to teach them even though it may be difficult. You'll find that the more you talk about sex, the easier it gets.

Remember that your children are exposed to many sources of information that could harm their sexual development. If they have access to the Internet, supervise them and talk to them about what they've seen.

**YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT INCLUDES: MAINTAINING OPEN COMMUNICATION, BEING A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL, AND DIRECTLY SUPERVISING YOUR CHILDREN**



## LET'S TALK ABOUT HIV/AIDS: HOW IT AFFECTS THE LATINO COMMUNITY

In the past few years, HIV/AIDS has dramatically increased within the Latino community. It is important to know how to protect yourself and your family.

### Did you know that...

Latinas are more likely to become infected through heterosexual contact.

Overall, Latinos represent one fifth of all persons infected with AIDS in the United States.

The majority of Latinas who get pregnant are unaware of their infection until they undergo prenatal care. More than one fifth of babies born with HIV are Latino.

If your family has been directly affected by HIV/AIDS, remember that a person with HIV or AIDS can continue to live a healthy life. When people hear that a family member has been infected with HIV, many still associate HIV and AIDS with death. It is important to understand that there are many Latinos who were infected more than 10 years ago who are still alive and healthy today. With good medical care, adequate treatment, and the love and support from family, a diagnosis of HIV or AIDS can be like any other chronic disease.

### HIV and AIDS: What are they?

**HIV:** Is a virus that affects the body's defenses, slowly weakening the infected person and exposing them to a variety of illnesses.

**AIDS:** Is a result of HIV when it is not controlled and the body's defenses become weak.

AIDS

## HOW IS HIV TRANSMITTED?

It is very important to know that HIV is not transmitted through casual contact. You can not get infected by kissing, hugging, drinking from the same glass, interacting or living with a person who has HIV/AIDS. The only way you can become infected is by contact with semen, vaginal fluids, blood, and breast milk, through...

**Unprotected sex  
(oral, vaginal, anal)**

**Sharing needles  
and injection  
equipment**

**Transfusions with  
infected blood**

**Infection of a baby  
through pregnancy  
or breastfeeding**

## HOW TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY AGAINST HIV/AIDS

In addition to establishing open family communication, consider the following:

Develop a stable relationship with your family and demonstrate unconditional love for your spouse and children.

Talk openly about protection, not only to prevent pregnancy but also to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Avoid mixing sex with drugs and alcohol.

When you decide to have children, you and your partner should have all necessary medical exams, including an HIV test prior to becoming pregnant. This can guarantee your health and the health of your baby.





## Blinded by love

Manuel and Leticia had been married for 10 years when their lives began to change. Leticia had built her world around Manuel, her first and only love, and their eight year old son. Although Manuel worked long hours, he began to come home even later. One time when he didn't come home until the next evening, Leticia confronted him in tears. He told her that he was working and couldn't call her. Deep inside, Leticia knew something else was happening but she ignored her feelings. He started coming home drunk and no matter how hard she tried to make him happy, he became more distant.

Leticia thought that if she had another baby, he would fall in love with her again. When Leticia found out she was pregnant she started her prenatal care and decided to take all her medical exams, including a test for HIV. She was in shock when her doctor told her that she had HIV. When she confronted Manuel, he confessed that he was infected. She couldn't believe what was happening. *"He never told me. He knew he was infected and he knowingly infected me and got me pregnant. I thank God that I had early treatment and our child is HIV free."*

**TALK TO YOUR PARTNER ABOUT PROTECTION**

*"I thank God for the love and support of my family."*

## Life's treasures

Rosa and Gabi met each other at the clinic while waiting for their appointments. They started talking about what it's like to be a Latina living with HIV. Although it hadn't been easy, Rosa said that the love of her family had made the difference. *"I thank God for my family's support. Their love and understanding has really helped me deal with my infection."* Unfortunately, Gabi's family hadn't yet learned about HIV and didn't know how to help her. *"Since my family found out I have HIV they hardly speak to me. They're afraid I will infect them. When they invited me for Christmas dinner, they served my food on paper plates with plastic utensils. I felt terrible."* Gabi said that her family thought that HIV was something that only happened to homosexuals and prostitutes. They didn't understand how a decent person like her could be infected with HIV ...If they only knew that anyone can get infected.



**IF SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY HAD A CHRONIC ILLNESS LIKE CANCER, WOULD YOU TREAT THEM THE SAME IF THEY HAD HIV/AIDS?**

# YOU ARE YOUR CHILDREN'S MOST IMPORTANT TEACHER



The most rewarding part of life is having a family that stays together and communicates well. Don't be afraid to talk openly to your partner and your children about sex.





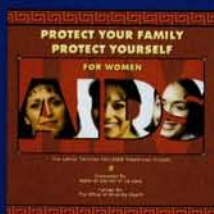
Many Latino families have partners, parents, children, brothers, sisters and other family members who have been affected by HIV. This brochure is designed to help Latino families understand how communication and support can help prevent HIV infection.

**You're not alone.  
Your family's health depends on you.  
Let us help you.**

*For copies of other brochures in this series, or for more information, please call:*

**1-(800)-920-5990**

**Estos folletos también están disponibles en Español**



**Britt Rios-Ellis, Ph.D.**  
Principal Investigator and Professor  
California State University Long Beach  
(562)-985-1770  
bellis@csulb.edu

**Rocio Leon, B.S.**  
Project Coordinator  
National Council of La Raza, Los Angeles  
(562)-544-7191  
rleon@nclr.org

*These brochures were printed courtesy of the Aspire A Más Foundation*

