

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY PROTECT YOURSELF

FOR WOMEN



The Latino Families HIV/AIDS Prevention Project



Conducted By:
National Council of La Raza

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Protect Your Family Protect Yourself: For Women

Enough is enough

Lupe had been married to Gerardo for eight years when she decided she'd had enough. Even though he gave her everything she needed, he also liked to drink and go out with other women. Lupe thought that once they got married he would change, but he didn't. During the first year of their marriage Lupe got pregnant. Early in her pregnancy, Gerardo came home drunk one night and hit her when she refused to have sex with him. From that point on, Lupe would always give in to his desires. Her friends would tell her that they'd seen him with other women and that she should be careful because he could infect her with a disease. When Lupe asked Gerardo to use condoms, he became violent and said, *"I'm not going to wear that! In my house, you do what I say and if you don't like it, I can find someone else. There's no way you can survive alone with the children. You're so stupid and ugly! Who is going to want you?"* Lupe felt desperate and didn't know what to do. How was she going to support her children? She realized that, *"Latinas are at risk for infection because we're afraid to talk to our husbands about condoms. We're afraid that our husbands will leave us, so we stay quiet and take the risk of having unprotected sex."*

Gerardo got violent with one of their children, Lupe realized that she couldn't stay with him any longer. One night, like many, when Gerardo didn't come home, Lupe saw a commercial about domestic violence and decided to call the number. The counselor on the line comforted her and referred her to a help center where she found the support she needed. At the center they asked her to get tested for sexually transmitted infections. Thank God, Lupe only had a curable sexually transmitted infection and not HIV. Even though it was a difficult time, Lupe found the strength to go back to school and start working. She learned to live without fear and was able to provide the best for herself and her children.



LEARN TO LOVE YOURSELF! YOU'RE WORTH IT! YOUR BODY AND YOUR LIFE BELONG TO YOU!

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PARTNER ABOUT SEX

Many Latinas are afraid to talk to their partners about sex. Even though it's important to speak openly before having sex, many people find it difficult to talk about. Clear and open communication is the key to a good and satisfying intimate relationship with your partner.

Remember that intimacy is a process and to make it possible you need to share your feelings and ideas within an environment of acceptance, compromise, trust and mutual respect. It is important that your partner respects your values.

**THE DECISION TO HAVE SEX IS YOURS
FEEL FREE TO EXPRESS YOUR DESIRES**



Let's talk about sex

Decisions regarding sex should be made by both you and your partner. When and how you have sex should not only be the man's decision. Learn to know your body and don't be afraid to tell your partner what you like and don't like. Don't fake what you don't feel and be honest with your partner. To have a healthy relationship, you should feel comfortable talking about:

- The importance of affection and foreplay
- Expressing emotions and feelings
- Respecting each other's sexual likes and dislikes
- The use of condoms
- Birth control

YOU DESERVE THE RIGHT TO ENJOY A HEALTHY AND SATISFYING SEX LIFE

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

Did you know that:

- 1 out of every 4 women with AIDS in the United States is Latina.
- Latinas with AIDS are more likely to have been infected through heterosexual contact.
- In the United States, women represent 1/3 of new HIV infection cases.
- 1 out of every 4 Latinas with HIV is infected by having sex with a man who injects drugs or who has injected drugs in the past.

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.

HOW IS HIV TRANSMITTED?

It is very important to know that HIV is not transmitted through casual contact. You cannot 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

WHY ARE LATINAS AT RISK?

Women, especially Latinas, are the fastest growing group with HIV infection. The factors which increase HIV risk among Latina women are:

**Machismo,
because some
men refuse to
use protection**

**Women's
dependence
on men**

**Domestic
violence and
the excessive
use of drugs
and alcohol**

**Lack of
sexual
information**

**Low self-
esteem and the
submission of
women**

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST HIV/AIDS

Use protection, not only to prevent pregnancy, but to also prevent sexually transmitted infections like HIV.

Learn to use a condom correctly. Make it part of your relationship. Always remember to protect yourself!

If your partner doesn't want to use a condom, don't be afraid to say "no" to sex.

Avoid having sex under the excessive influence of alcohol and drugs.

Don't make excuses. If your partner's behavior is putting you at risk, talk to him. If he doesn't care, make a plan to leave the relationship.

If you're being physically or emotionally abused by your partner, get help. Talk to a counselor or someone you trust so you can get the support you need.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND TO BE PROTECTED!

There's still time...

Three years ago, when Ana became pregnant with her second child, she felt that her life was now complete. She was happily married to Juan, who not only was a great father but a wonderful husband. Early in her pregnancy her doctor suggested that she take a test for HIV. She felt frightened, but decided to do everything possible to protect her baby. When the doctor told her she was infected with HIV she was shocked. She was sure it was a mistake but when she repeated the test, the result was the same. She realized that, *"Latinas are afraid to face the possibility that they may be infected with HIV. They are scared to get tested."* Ana's doctor recommended that the whole family be tested for HIV. The test results showed that Juan was also infected; thank God their little girl was not. The doctor began treating Ana early in her pregnancy and after his birth her son was also found to be HIV free. Ana had been a virgin when she married Juan and didn't understand how she could have been infected. Juan finally confessed that before he brought her to the United States, he felt very lonely and had slept with other women. Although Juan told her that these women meant nothing, Ana was depressed.



She couldn't understand how Juan could have sacrificed their dreams for a moment of pleasure. One day when Ana was at the clinic, she met Lucia. Lucia had also been infected by her husband but didn't find out until it was too late and she already had full blown AIDS. Although Lucia was very sick, she was strong and at peace with her situation. Lucia told her, *"Many women think they can't get infected, and that HIV is only for prostitutes and women who use drugs. They think HIV is only for other women, and that it won't happen to them. Many men come to the U.S. to work and they don't use protection. They return to their countries, or bring their wives here, and they infect them."* Lucia helped Ana realize that she could control her HIV and that she was fortunate to have been diagnosed in time for early treatment. Juan knew that he was wrong to have been unfaithful and asked Ana to forgive him. As time passed, Ana realized that Juan's mistakes had been made many years ago. She decided that their future was more important, and that together their family could face the challenges that lie ahead.

EARLY DETECTION CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE: GET TESTED!

ENJOY YOUR SEXUALITY RESPONSIBLY



If your partner doesn't want to use condoms, insist! The risk of having sex without a condom isn't worth becoming infected with HIV.



Just as your partner has high expectations of you, you also deserve someone who will fulfill your desires.



If your partner is macho, remind him that a good man protects his family, his children, and his partner.



If you suspect infidelity in your relationship, confront your partner. Remember that you and your family are at risk.

BREAK THE SILENCE: YOU DESERVE TO KNOW

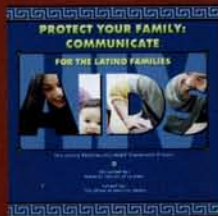
Many Latinas have husbands, boyfriends, parents, children, brothers, sisters and other family members who have been affected by HIV. This brochure is designed to help Latinas understand how communication and support can help prevent HIV infection.

**You're not alone.
Your health and your family's health depend 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



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