

Perinatal Transmission of HIV among Hispanics/Latinos



BACKGROUND

WHAT IS PERINATAL TRANSMISSION?

A pregnant woman infected with HIV/AIDS can pass the virus to her infant during gestation, prior to or during labor and delivery, or breastfeeding; known as perinatal transmission. Perinatal transmission is the most common route of HIV infection in children under the age of 13 years in the United States and dependent areas. However, advances in antiretroviral treatment of pregnant HIV- infected women carrying out their pregnancies to term have drastically reduced the risk of perinatal transmission.¹

Disparities²

Despite these advances, disparities exist. There were an estimated **107 diagnoses of perinatal HIV transmission** in children aged <13 years in 2013 in the United States and dependent areas. An estimated 7 diagnoses of Stage 3/ AIDS attributed to perinatal transmission occurred in children under the age of 13 years in the United States and 6 dependent areas in 2013. Of the estimated perinatal-transmission HIV cases in the United States alone among children under the ages of 13 in 2013: 64% (68) were non-Hispanic Black/African-American, **9% (10) were Hispanic/Latino**, and 15% (16) were non-Hispanic white. Of the estimated Stage 3/AIDS diagnoses attributed to perinatal transmission among youth less than 13 years of age in the United States alone in 2013: 43% (3) were non-Hispanic Black/African-American, and **28% (2) were Hispanic/Latino**, compared to zero diagnoses among non-Hispanic white children.

Risk Factors

•**Lack of Awareness of HIV Status.** Not knowing one's status when trying to conceive or when becoming pregnant increases the risk of perinatal transmission if one is infected, as appropriate and timely antiretroviral treatment prior to conception and/or during pregnancy can greatly reduce the risk of transmission.

•**Uneven HIV Testing Rates.** Studies show that HIV testing rates for pregnant women vary widely. A relatively high proportion of women of childbearing age are unaware that treatment is available with HIV.³ Providing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services that include screening and treatment for HIV as well as other sexually-transmitted infections (STIs), along with family planning services, contraceptive and pregnancy options counseling, and prenatal care may greatly reduce barriers to testing, particularly for those women fearful of accessing testing services due to immigration status, substance use, age, and/or interpersonal violence/relationship coercion.⁴

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pediatric HIV Surveillance.

²Center for Disease Control and Prevention. HIV Surveillance Report, Volume 25. Diagnoses of HIV Infection in the United States and Dependent Areas, 2013.

³Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "One Test. Two Lives". Atlanta: Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/perinatal/1test2lives>

⁴Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HIV Among Pregnant Women, Infants and Children in the United States. January 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.thebodypro.com/content/70380/hiv-among-pregnant-women-infants-and-children-in-t.html>