



HOPE for Babies

Mother-to-child transmission of HIV is the most common way infants contract the virus and happens when HIV is passed from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding. HOPE Cape Town conducts a project in collaboration with Tygerberg Hospital which aims to support the pregnant women who come to Tygerberg Hospital for care. Through counselling and psychosocial support, the project aims to help HIV negative women avoid infection and help HIV positive women adhere to medication and prevent transmission to their unborn babies and their newborn infants.

An effective Prevention of Mother to Child Transmissions (PMTCT) programme requires mothers and their babies to:

- Receive antenatal services and HIV testing during pregnancy
- Have access to antiretroviral treatment (ART)
- Practice safe childbirth practices and appropriate infant feeding
- Make use of infant HIV testing and other post-natal healthcare services

HOPE Cape Town has identified the need for additional counselling and support of mothers during this vulnerable period. Our first priority is to ensure that HIV uninfected mothers remain HIV negative during their pregnancies. The project aims to help diagnose and support HIV positive mothers during the pregnancies, delivery and post-natal period, to reduce the risk of transmission to their babies.

Through our HOPE for Babies project at Tygerberg Hospital, HOPE Cape Town aims to address this on various levels by assigning two full-time HOPE Community Health Workers to the following areas:

Antenatal Clinic

- Pregnancy related health talks and information sessions for expectant mothers
- Counselling and guidance on feeding choices
- Family planning counselling
- Support of HIV positive mothers
- PMTCT counselling

Labour Ward

- Test / re-test all unbooked and HIV negative mothers when they present in labour (in accordance with the South African National Guidelines)
- Support HIV positive mothers through the birthing process, ensuring that they take their treatment and that safe birthing practices are followed
- Review feeding choices

Postnatal ward and clinic

- Assist with new-born care
- Assist vulnerable mothers' transition to motherhood
- Provide psychosocial support to mothers who are in need
- Ensure that HIV positive mothers understand and commit to their own treatment regimens as well as the prescribed infant prophylaxis
- Review feeding choices
- Confirm the community based health care facility where the mother/infant pair will continue their care
- Family planning counselling

Community

- Community based follow-up of high-risk patients by phone calls