

## Dear Petronella

Firstly, there is no need for you to leave home. You are not in danger. Now that your uncle is so ill, he needs companionship and help.

There are three main ways that a person can get HIV: by having unprotected sex with an infected person; through infected blood on needles or blades; or from mother to child at birth or when breastfeeding.

You will NOT get HIV from sharing plates, towels or toilets, or even sleeping in the same room. There is a small risk of infection if you have a cut on your hands and fresh blood from someone with HIV goes into it. To be extra safe, protect your hands with rubber gloves, a plastic bag or paper when cleaning up anything with blood or body fluids on it. Always wash your hands and dirty bedding and clothes in soapy water. You can also use bleach, like Jik, if you want.

Looking after a sick person is hard, so you need support. There are organisations and people in most areas who give medical help and advice, and talk to you about your worries. Sometimes they even help with food and school fees.

So, remember: your uncle needs your help and compassion. Do not be afraid.

**Auntie Stella**

## ACTION POINTS

- In most families, women are responsible for looking after a sick person. What role can men and young people play? Why is it important to involve them? Make a list of the things you can do to help. For example: help clean sick people's homes, talk to them, play with the children or help them with their homework, fetch firewood and cook a meal.
- Find out which organisations, churches or clinics in your area help when families are looking after people with HIV or AIDS. Do any of them give training in home-based care? Would you like to be trained? You can also start or join a support group for young people caring for people with HIV or AIDS. Share your worries and achievements.
- In your group, list the reasons why so many young people contract HIV. (Include social, religious and cultural reasons as well as other problems like poverty, no jobs, problems with clinics, and so on.)
  - a** Which of these problems can you solve and how?
  - b** Which of these problems are so big that they need larger, more powerful organisations to take on the challenge?
  - c** Is there a role for young people in helping these larger organisations?
- What can **you** do to help yourself and others stay uninfected?