

Dear Auntie Stella

I'm a woman of 21 years and I am six months pregnant. My husband was ill for some time and passed away recently. I have now moved back to my parents.

When I registered at the maternity clinic the nurse told me about an HIV testing programme and I agreed to be tested. I got the result the same day and the nurse said I was HIV positive, even though I have not been sick. I was really upset but especially because of the baby. I don't want to give her HIV.

The nurse said they can give me a drug called Nevirapine to help the baby. She also said something about breastfeeding my baby for a long time. But I was crying and I didn't really understand.

So, Auntie, what can I do to help my baby? Will she be born already sick? And since I have HIV, is it safe to breastfeed the baby?

Chipo

TALKING POINTS

- Is Chipo right to be worried about her baby? What happens when a mother is HIV positive or has AIDS? Can the baby be infected? When does this happen?
- What are the advantages and risks of breastfeeding when you are HIV positive? What would you advise Chipo to do?
- What does your culture say about women who choose not to breastfeed? What can people do to change negative attitudes to women who make this choice?

