

# Explaining HIV, sex and death to children living with Aids

By **LYNNE ALTENROXEL**

Two decades into the world's HIV epidemic, a growing number of infected children are surviving babyhood - leaving paediatricians with the difficult task of explaining the complexities of Aids, sex and death to their young patients.

In some instances, parents choose not to tell their children that they are infected and, with children as old as 14 living with the virus, the question is how to deal with informing youngsters about safe sex - and even how to explain the reasons why their parents have died.

A local publishing company has designed a series of eight books about Aids, aimed at children and designed speci-



fically for South Africa.

The series tackles tough issues by giving simple explanations alongside colourful photographs and graphics.

One volume is an autobiography by the late Nkosi John-

SIPHWE SIBEKO

**HIV ABC ...** this series of eight books is designed to explain the complexities of Aids to South African children.

son, who died from Aids last year. Other volumes deal with issues ranging from circumcision to basic medical information about the virus.

"Can you remember the last time you had a cold?" one book

asks. "For a while, your head ached, you coughed and you sniffed. Then the cold went away. This is because your body has an immune system.

"The immune system defends the body, and fights the germs and viruses that make you ill. But HIV attacks the immune system, and the body can no longer fight."

Michael Neu-Ner, spokesperson for Awareness Publishing, said the books aimed to fill a gap in the market. Similar overseas publications were not suitable for Africa, he said.

The books cost about R120 each, with libraries being the main target market.

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