Sign language for health

In most communities around the world, deaf people have created their own sign language. They use signs to communicate as well and nearly as fast as hearing people do. The signs shown here are from several countries. The sign for the same word can be different in different places. Use these signs as a guide. If you are a health worker, family member, or caregiver, ask the deaf women in your community to teach you the signs they use, how you should change and adapt these signs, and to teach you other signs. Sign language can help you make sure deaf women in your community get good health care.

**SIGNS HEALTH WORKERS NEED TO KNOW**

Here are examples of some signs a health worker needs to know to provide good health services for deaf women. Sometimes signs are based on gestures, and sometimes by finger-spelling letters of the alphabet.

**Signs that point at the body**

Body parts can be pointed at to show where a pain is. For example, to show a pain in the belly, make the sign for pain and then point to the belly.

**Signs that use gestures**

Here are examples of other signs to use in a health setting. These signs mostly use gestures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIDS</th>
<th>Infection</th>
<th>Medicine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="fromKenya.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="fromVietnam.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="fromUS.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from Kenya</td>
<td>from Vietnam</td>
<td>from Kenya</td>
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<table>
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<th>Sex</th>
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A Health Handbook for Women with Disabilities 2007
Signs that use finger spelling

Many words can be understood by using finger spelling. For instance:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>STI</th>
<th>Condom</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>from the US</td>
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<table>
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Other useful words to learn signs for

Here are suggestions for other words it would be good for a health worker to learn in a local sign language:

- abortion
- abuse
- anus
- birth
- blood/bleeding
- blurred vision
- breast
- breastfeeding
- breathing
- problems
- burning
- changes in color
- contractions
- cough
- chills
- clean/wash
- cramps
- cuts/sores/tears
- depression
- diarrhea
- discharge
- dizzy
- drugs
- dry
- exams
- exercise
- faint
- no feeling (numb)
- passing urine
- fever
- growth (on skin or inside body)
- itchy
- labor
- lump
- medicines
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