

Testing for HIV during pregnancy

From : Canadian Paediatric Society, 2204 Walkley Road, Suite 100, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4G8; Phone: 613-526-9397, fax: 613-526-3332; <http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/babies/HIVtesting.htm>

What tests are usually done during pregnancy?

Doctors recommend testing for hepatitis B, rubella (German measles), syphilis and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Each of these infections could hurt the baby if they are not treated.

Do I have to have these tests?

These tests are offered to you for the health of your baby. However, you can choose whether you want to be tested.

I already had a blood test. Wouldn't it have been tested for HIV?

Blood can be tested for many things. It would only be tested for HIV if you gave your permission. If your doctor did not discuss HIV testing with you, it probably wasn't done. So you should be tested for HIV during this pregnancy. Even if you had an HIV test once before and it was negative, you should have the test done again during each pregnancy.

How could I have gotten HIV?

HIV is passed from one person to another:

- through sexual intercourse (without a condom or if the condom breaks);
- through blood (for example, sharing needles or syringes); or
- from mother to baby. Most women have been infected through sexual intercourse. Many of these women did not know their partner was HIV-positive.

How is the HIV test done?

It is a blood test that can be ordered at the same time as your other prenatal tests.

I'm thinking about having a baby. Should I have a test for HIV?

Yes, you and your partner may both want to be tested for HIV. The results will give you information that may affect your decisions about having a baby.

Why should I have an HIV test during pregnancy?

If you are pregnant and infected with HIV, there's treatment that will improve your health and reduce the chance that the virus passes from you to your baby. Without treatment, one in four babies will get HIV infection from their mother. With treatment, the chance of infection is as low as one in 100.

What are the disadvantages to being tested for HIV?

The decision to take the test and then waiting for the results can be very stressful. If your test results are HIV-positive, you will have many decisions to make. Even though it is a stressful time, you need this information to decide what is best for you and your family.

Where can I find more information on HIV and pregnancy?

Call your doctor, local public health unit (CLSC in the province of Quebec), or one of the clinics listed below. This information should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your physician. There may be variations in treatment that your physician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances

Additional resources for pregnant women with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)*

National

Motherisk HIV Healthline - an HIV counsellor answers questions on HIV and pregnancy from women or care providers
1-888-246-5840,
www.motherisk.org

Positive Women's Network - based in Vancouver, British Columbia, it is an agency providing support, information, community education and advocacy for women with HIV
1-604-692-3000
1-866-692-3001
www.positivewomen.org.au

Voices of Positive Women - Toronto, Ontario agency providing support, information and advocacy for women with HIV
1-416-324-8703 • www.webhome.idirect.com/~vopw

Canadian AIDS Society - includes a list of AIDS Service organizations across Canada. To access, under "contacts" choose "members"
(613) 230-3580 • www.cdnaids.ca

Canadian HIV/AIDS Clearinghouse - provides information on HIV/AIDS prevention
1-877-999-7740 • www.clearinghouse.cpha.ca (bilingual)

Community AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE) - based in Canada, provides up-to-date information, including a toll-free telephone line with confidential counselling and access to resources
(877) 999-7740 • www.catie.ca (bilingual)

HIV/AIDS Treatment Information Service - based in the United States, provides information on American treatment guidelines for HIV and AIDS
1-800-HIV-0440 (1-800-448-0440) • www.hivatis.org

Managing Your Health, 1999. This publication is jointly produced by CATIE and the Toronto People with AIDS foundation, and contains an extensive list of telephone numbers of AIDS resources across Canada. To order free copies (English or French) contact:
Canadian HIV Clearinghouse
400-1565 Carling Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario K1Z 8R1
1-613-725-3434

St Justine's HIV Clinic - Montreal, Quebec HIV clinic for women and children
1-514-345-4836 • www.hsj.qc.ca

The Hospital for Sick Children's HIV Clinic - Toronto clinic for children and families with HIV program
1-416-813-6268 • www.sickkids.on.ca

National HIV/AIDS Network for Children, Youth and Families

www.resnat.ca/e/resources_clinics.html

Le réseau national VIH/SIDA pour les Enfants, Jeunes, et Familles

www.resnat.ca/f/ressources_cliniques.html

Project Inform - an American HIV/AIDS Treatment Information Service for people living with HIV/AIDS
1-800-833-7422 • <http://www.projinf.org/>

British Columbia Persons with AIDS Society
1-604-681-2122 • www.bcpwa.org

The Centre for AIDS Services of Montreal (Women) - based in Quebec, Montreal link to AIDS services for women
514-843-3636 • www.netrover.com/~casm (bilingual)

The Teresa Group Child and Family Aid - based in Ontario, Toronto link to AIDS services for women and children. The Teresa Group is a contact agency for Ontario's free formula program
1-416-596-7703 • www.teresagroup.org

Québécoises

Ligne d'écoute par les pairs pour les femmes vivant avec le VIH/sida
1-866-240-0090 • www.criss.org

Comité des personnes atteintes du VIH du Québec (CPAVIH)
1-800-927-2844 • www.cpavih.qc.ca/

Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois - sida (Cocq-sida)
1-514-844-2477 • www.alqi.qc.ca/asso/cq.html

Clinique du VIH de Sainte-Justine : Clinique de VIH de Montréal, au Québec, pour les femmes et les enfants
(514) 345-4836 • www.hsj.qc.ca (francophone)

Le Centre d'action sida Montréal (Femmes) : Installé au Québec, lien montréalais avec les services associés au sida pour les femmes
514-843-3636 • www.netrover.com/~casm (bilingual)

Je suis fière d'être Autochtone et je fais ma part pour prévenir la propagation du VIH dans ma communauté. Je veux protéger ceux que j'aime.

I am proud to be Aboriginal and I am doing my part to prevent the spread of HIV in my community. I want to protect the people I love.

Prenez soin de toi !
Take care of yourself!

Akua tutatish!

Amel Coyne
Ama Coyne
Autonome

LE CERCLE DE L'ESPOIR
THE CIRCLE OF HOPE
Partnership between the 11 Quebec HIV/AIDS Centers

Information for pregnant women who have HIV

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If you have HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) and are pregnant, you probably have many questions. This handout will help you learn about:

- whether your baby will have HIV too;
- the best way for you to deliver your baby; and
- what will happen to your baby after birth.

I am HIV positive and pregnant. Will my baby be infected too?

Without treatment, your baby has a one in four chance of getting HIV. But there are things that can help reduce the risk. During your pregnancy and delivery, you can take a drug called zidovudine. If your newborn baby also receives this drug, the chance of the baby being infected with HIV drops to about one in 20. As well, if you are taking special drugs for HIV such as a triple combination that lowers your viral load, it is even less likely that your baby will be born with HIV.

If I am HIV positive and pregnant, should I deliver the baby by Caesarean Section?

If you are not taking any medicine for HIV or if you are just taking zidovudine, it is better for your baby to be delivered by caesarean section rather than vaginally. Otherwise, the risk of your baby being infected with HIV is twice as great if you deliver vaginally.

If you are taking a combination of drugs (to control your infection) and the amount of virus circulating in your blood is undetectable, there seems to be no clear advantage for a caesarean delivery compared with a vaginal delivery. You should talk to your doctor, who can look at your particular situation and give you appropriate advice for your situation.

If I take antiretroviral drugs during pregnancy, will that hurt my baby?

Not very many pregnant women have taken these drugs and the babies born to these women are still very young. To date, children exposed to these drugs during pregnancy haven't had major problems. It's still too early to say for sure that there will not be problems. If you have questions about taking HIV drugs during pregnancy, you should call this toll-free number: 1-888-246-5840.