

HIV Testing in Pregnancy

Why should you get tested?

A study in the United States has shown that pregnant women who are infected with the HIV virus (are HIV positive) can considerably lower the chance of passing the virus to their baby if they get medical care and are given medicines to treat the virus.

Health experts in British Columbia recommend that **all** pregnant women be tested for the virus. It is recommended that pregnant women get HIV testing at the beginning of each pregnancy. If the expectant mother has had high-risk exposures through the pregnancy, then the test should be repeated during the pregnancy.

HIV testing of pregnant women is not done in many developing countries. Parents or guardians of children born in or adopted from these countries should consider HIV testing for their children.

What are the chances that you are HIV positive?

The chance of a pregnant woman being HIV positive is considerably higher if she takes part in known HIV risk behaviours.

Before 1995, six babies were born each year in B.C. with HIV passed from their mothers before or during birth. Since 1995, when HIV testing of pregnant women became standard practice, this has happened much less often and only with women who were not tested in pregnancy or who received no pregnancy care. There have been no transmissions in women who have been diagnosed with HIV infection and have received specialized pregnancy and delivery care. This shows how important and

effective testing for HIV is to protect your baby from HIV infection.

How do you get tested?

Your doctor can easily arrange a test for HIV with your knowledge and consent. Counseling is available before and after the test for HIV.

Where can you get more information?

You can get information about being tested for HIV from the Public Health Nurses in your local health unit.

Doctors who need more information about HIV testing during pregnancy, or about the care of pregnant women who are HIV positive, should call the Women and Family HIV Centre in Vancouver (Oak Tree Clinic) at 604-875-2212.



BC Centre for Disease Control
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