

HIV Testing and Pregnancy

I am pregnant. Will I be tested for HIV?

HIV testing is recommended for all pregnant women. HIV testing is provided to pregnant women in two ways: *opt-in* or *opt-out testing*. In areas with *opt-in testing*, women must ask to be tested and may need to sign an HIV testing consent form. In areas with *opt-out testing*, HIV testing is automatically included as part of routine prenatal care. With *opt-out testing*, women must specifically ask **not** to be tested and sign a form refusing HIV testing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that *opt-out testing* be provided to all pregnant women.

Ask your health care provider about HIV testing in your area. If HIV *opt-out testing* is not available, ask to be tested for HIV.

What are the benefits of HIV testing for pregnant women?

A mother who knows early in her pregnancy that she is HIV infected has more time to make important decisions. She and her health care provider will have more time to decide on effective ways to protect her health and prevent **mother-to-child transmission of HIV**. She can also take steps to prevent infecting others with HIV (see the [Understanding HIV Prevention](#) fact sheet).

How will I be tested for HIV?

You will be tested with an HIV antibody test. When a person is first infected with HIV, the body produces antibodies to HIV. HIV antibodies recognize and fight the virus. The most commonly used HIV tests check for antibodies to HIV in a person's blood. (Some HIV antibody tests use urine or fluids from the mouth.)

HIV is diagnosed based on two positive HIV tests. If a person's first HIV test (using blood, mouth fluids, or urine) is positive, a second HIV test (only using blood) is always done. A second positive HIV test confirms that the person is definitely infected with HIV.

Results from the first HIV test are generally available within a few days. (Rapid HIV tests can produce results within an hour.) Getting results from the second test may take longer—from a few days to a few weeks after the test. People generally

Terms Used in This Fact Sheet:

Mother-to-child transmission of HIV: the passing of HIV from an HIV-infected mother to her infant during pregnancy, during labor and delivery, or by breastfeeding.

receive their results during a follow-up visit with a health care provider.

HIV-infected pregnant women have many options to stay healthy and protect their babies from HIV. HIV-infected pregnant women receive anti-HIV medications to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV and, if needed, for their own health.

If you are diagnosed with HIV, your health care provider will answer your questions about HIV and discuss ways to help you and your baby stay healthy. Together you can make decisions about HIV care during your pregnancy.

What happens if I ask not to be tested for HIV?

You will not be tested for HIV. However, you may be offered counseling on how HIV is spread and ways to prevent HIV transmission. Throughout your pregnancy your health care provider may re-emphasize the benefits of testing and encourage you to reconsider your decision not to be tested.

Where can I find information on HIV testing in my state?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) can provide you with HIV testing information for your state. Contact HHS at 1-877-696-6775 or 1-202-619-0257.

For more information:

Contact an AIDSinfo Health Information Specialist at 1-800-448-0440 or <http://aidsinfo.nih.gov>. See your health care provider for medical advice.