

HIV testing in pregnancy

Why should I get tested?

HIV testing is important for people to receive early treatment, care and information to manage their disease. This includes information about how to prevent passing HIV to other people. A person with HIV can pass the virus to their baby during pregnancy, childbirth or while breast/chest feeding. Because of the risk of passing HIV to your baby, it is very important for you to get tested for HIV. You need to start treatment as soon as possible to improve your own health and help you have a healthy pregnancy and baby.

Should I get tested if I am planning a pregnancy?

Knowing your HIV status is important information in planning a healthy pregnancy. Both you and your partner should be tested for STIs, including HIV, before having sex without a condom.

When should I get tested during pregnancy?

Health experts in British Columbia recommend that all pregnant people are offered HIV testing at the start of each pregnancy, ideally in the first trimester. If you or your partner(s) may have been exposed to HIV at any time before or during your pregnancy, or if you have any questions about HIV testing or ways to reduce your risk of getting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), speak to your health care provider.

How do I get tested?

You can get a referral for an HIV test through your health care provider, at a walk-in clinic

or by visiting one of the clinics listed in the Smart Sex Resource Clinic Finder:

www.smartsexresource.com/get-tested/clinic-finder.

If you have had blood tests during your pregnancy, ask your health care provider to confirm if you were tested for HIV.

How can I prevent HIV infection?

You can reduce your risk of HIV infection by using safer sex supplies such as condoms when having sex, using safer drug use equipment and other measures. For more information about preventing HIV, see [HealthLinkBC File #08m HIV and HIV tests](#).

What are the chances of passing HIV to my baby?

If you are living with HIV and are pregnant, you might pass the virus to your baby during pregnancy or childbirth. However, this chance is mostly eliminated if you consistently take HIV medicines to reduce the amount of virus in your body.

HIV can also be passed to your baby when breast/chest feeding. Breast/chest feeding or expressing your milk and feeding your baby by bottle is not recommended if you are living with HIV.

What if I am adopting a baby or giving birth outside of Canada?

HIV testing during pregnancy 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. Speak to your health care provider for more information.

For more information

For more information, visit the following resources:

- [HealthLinkBC File #08m HIV and HIV tests](#)
- Oak Tree Clinic – BC Women’s Hospital & Health Centre: Call 604 875-2212 or visit www.bcwomens.ca/our-services/specialized-services/hiv-care-for-women-families
- Smart Sex Resource – Get Tested: www.smartsexresource.com/get-tested/when-to-test

You can also contact your local public health unit for more information about HIV and HIV testing during pregnancy. To find your local public health unit, search HealthLinkBC’s FIND Services and Resources Directory: www.healthlinkbc.ca/services-and-resources/find-services.