



How can I protect myself and my baby from HIV?

HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can be very dangerous for babies. If you are having a baby or thinking about having one:

- Talk with your partner about HIV and STIs. Talk about ways to protect the baby's health. You may want to ask your partner to get tested for HIV and STIs.
- If your partner has not been tested for HIV and STIs, talk about using condoms for vaginal, anal and oral sex. Even if you had sex without condoms in the past, it may be wise to use them now.
- Don't shoot drugs or share works (needles). If you do shoot drugs, wash your needle with bleach before each use. You can call the National Drug and Alcohol Hotline (1-800-662-4357) to learn about treatment.
- Early treatment can help protect you and your baby. In addition to HIV, pregnant women are often tested for other STIs like chlamydia, syphilis and hepatitis B. Talk with your healthcare provider to see what tests are recommended for you.

**Help yourself and your baby.
Get tested for HIV.**

Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, are effective at reducing the risk of transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, if the condom covers the affected area or site of potential exposure. To reduce risk of transmission of herpes, couples should abstain from sexual intercourse during an outbreak.

STI Resource Center

919.361.8488

Monday - Friday, 9 am to 6 pm EST

www.ASHAstd.org

www.iwannaknow.org (for teens)

www.quierosaber.org (en español)

Since 1914, the **American Social Health Association (ASHA)** has been dedicated to improving the health of individuals, families, and communities, with a focus on preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and their harmful consequences. ASHA has pursued its mission through education, communication, advocacy and policy analysis activities. These are designed to heighten public, patient, provider, policymaker and media awareness of STI prevention, screening, diagnosis and treatment strategies.

The American Social Health Association (ASHA) publishes this and other materials to provide a valuable resource for accurate medical information and emotional support for those affected by sexually transmitted infections.

If you are a healthcare provider and would like to see our full range of available materials, please visit our online catalog at www.ashastdwebstore.org or call ASHA Customer Service at 1-800-783-9877.



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Pregnancy and the HIV Test

For All Women of
Childbearing Age



American Social Health Association

I'm pregnant... Should I get the HIV test?

There is a lot to think about when you want to have a baby or when a baby is on the way. One important step is to learn about HIV.



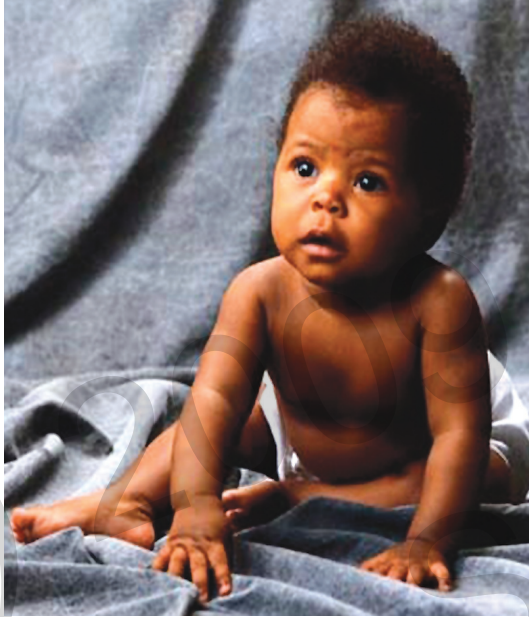
It is recommended that pregnant women be tested for HIV as part of their routine prenatal care, so talk with your healthcare provider or health department about getting an HIV test.

What is HIV?

HIV is the virus that can lead to AIDS. It is spread through body fluids, such as blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk. HIV attacks the immune system, which is the system in the body that fights disease. Over time, HIV can make the immune system so weak that it cannot protect the body from disease.

How can a baby get HIV?

If a pregnant woman has HIV, it can pass to her baby in the womb, during birth, or after birth through breast-feeding. Also, if a woman gets HIV while she is pregnant, she can pass the virus to her baby.



If a pregnant woman has HIV, does her baby always get it?

No. Most women with HIV do not pass the virus to their babies. The chance is about 1 in 4 that HIV will pass from mother to baby before or during birth.

The chance is much lower if the mother takes anti-HIV medicine while she is pregnant. Treatment often involves a combination of anti-retroviral medicines to treat HIV, and it may help to talk with your healthcare provider about the treatment options that are right for you and your baby. You may want to write down your questions before you talk.

Why get tested?

There are good reasons to get an HIV test if you are pregnant or thinking about having a baby. Knowing whether you have HIV can help you decide how to protect your baby.

- If you find out you don't have HIV, you can take steps to make sure you don't get it. Knowing you don't have HIV can give you peace of mind while you are pregnant.

- If you find out you have HIV, you can take medicine to lower the risk of passing the virus to the baby. You can also take good care of yourself so the baby will be strong.
- See a healthcare provider as soon as you find out you are pregnant.
- Do not use alcohol, drugs or any medicines not prescribed by your doctor.
- Tell your healthcare provider about any medicines you take.
- New medicines can slow the damage that HIV does to the immune system. If you have HIV, these drugs can help you live a longer, healthier life. You can care for your baby and other children.

What if I have been tested before?

Even if you have had an HIV test before, you may need to be tested again. If you don't know for sure whether your partner has HIV, talk with your healthcare provider or health department about getting another test. You may want to ask your partner to be tested.

