



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 may be offered HIV testing. Women who accept testing will 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) recommends 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 passing HIV to her partner. (See the [Preventing HIV Transmission](#) fact sheet.)

How will I be tested for HIV?

The most common HIV test is the **HIV antibody test**. HIV antibodies are a type of protein the body produces in response to HIV infection. An HIV antibody test looks for HIV antibodies in a person's blood, urine, or fluids from the mouth. When a person has a positive result from an HIV antibody test, a second and different type of antibody test is done to confirm that the person is indeed infected with HIV. The second test is called a confirmatory HIV test. To be diagnosed with HIV, a person's confirmatory HIV test must also be positive. (For more information, see the [Testing for HIV](#) fact sheet.)

Getting results from an HIV antibody blood test generally takes only a few days. (Results from some tests that use fluids from the mouth are ready within an hour.) Getting results from a confirmatory HIV test can take longer—from a few days to a few weeks after the test. People generally receive their results during a follow-up visit with a health care provider. It is important to keep your appointment for your HIV test results.

Terms Used in This Fact Sheet:

Mother-to-child transmission of HIV: the passing of HIV from a woman infected with HIV to her baby during pregnancy, during labor and delivery, or by breastfeeding.

HIV antibody test: an HIV test that checks for HIV antibodies in a person's blood, urine, or fluids from the mouth. When the body is infected with HIV, the immune system (the system of the body that fights off infections) produces HIV antibodies.

Pregnant women who test positive for HIV have many options to stay healthy and protect their babies from becoming HIV infected. Health care providers recommend that women infected with HIV take 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, your health care provider will likely re-emphasize the importance of HIV testing. You may be offered counseling on how HIV is spread and ways to prevent HIV transmission. Throughout your pregnancy, your health care provider may 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) offers information on HIV testing for each state. Contact HHS at 1-877-696-6775 or 1-202-619-0257. You can also find information on your state health department website.

For more information:

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