

facts on

For More Information

Contact:

1319 Colony Street
Saskatoon, SK S7N 2Z1
Bus. 306.651.4300
Fax. 306.651.4301
info@skprevention.ca
www.skprevention.ca

The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute is supported by:

Government of Saskatchewan
Kinsmen Telemiracle
Foundation
Saskatchewan Abilities Council
University of Saskatchewan
Community-At-Large

Routine and Special Tests During Pregnancy HIV and Pregnancy

What is HIV?

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that weakens the immune system (your body's natural defense system against disease, making it difficult for your body to fight infection). If HIV antibodies are found in your blood, you are considered to be HIV positive. HIV is the virus that causes Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). There is no cure for HIV or AIDS, but medications can help those living with the virus have longer, healthier lives.

Why should I be tested?

If you are thinking of getting pregnant or are already pregnant, your doctor will offer you an HIV test. Why be tested? Many people cannot be completely sure whether they have been exposed to HIV. The only way to know you are infected with HIV is to be tested. If you are pregnant and are living with HIV, you can pass HIV to your baby before or after birth. If you do not get treated, there is a 25% chance that you will pass the virus on to your baby. If you take medicine for HIV while pregnant, you can reduce the chance of infecting your baby to less than 2%.

How do I get tested?

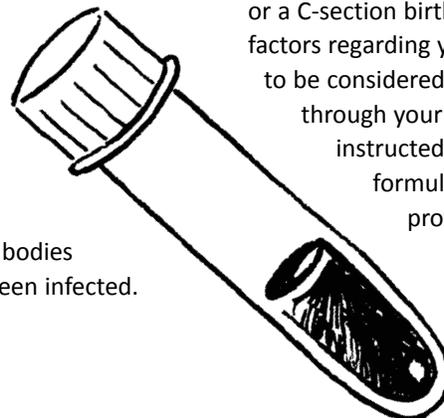
Your doctor will send you for a blood test to see if you have HIV. This test is to see whether your blood contains HIV antibodies. Antibodies develop after a person has been infected.

If HIV antibodies are present in your blood, you are HIV positive. If you are HIV positive, it does not mean that you have AIDS. If the first test is positive, a repeat test will be done, followed by another type of test to make sure the results are correct. In very rare cases, the test may say that you are infected when you are not. If there are any doubts, you can be tested again.

If you have been exposed to HIV very recently, your body may not have had time to make enough HIV antibodies to be measured by the test. In this case, you should be tested again later in your pregnancy, before you deliver your baby.

How will a positive HIV test affect me and my baby?

Knowing that you are HIV positive will help you and your doctor reduce the chances that your baby will be affected by HIV. Medicine can be given to you and to your baby to reduce the chance of the baby becoming infected during your pregnancy and at the time of birth. You and your doctor will discuss whether you should have a vaginal or a C-section birth, because a number of factors regarding your HIV status will need to be considered. HIV can also be passed through your breast milk, so you will be instructed to feed your baby formula. Talk to your health care provider for more information about accessing formula.



Who will support me if I am HIV positive?

A positive test can be a frightening event for many people. You will probably have many questions about how being HIV positive will affect you and the important people in your life. Your doctor and other health care providers can provide support for you and help answer the many questions you may have. Many communities have HIV/AIDS counsellors who can help provide advice, information, and support about how to cope with the disease and reduce the risk of passing the virus to someone else.

Remember that a positive HIV test does not mean that you have AIDS. AIDS is a very advanced HIV infection, where the body's immunity is severely damaged. Being HIV positive does mean that you can pass HIV on to other people, including to your baby. You can reduce this risk and live a longer, healthier life by knowing about your HIV status and working with your health care provider to manage your illness.

Information for this fact sheet was adapted from:

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Committee on Obstetric Practice. (2004). Prenatal and perinatal human immunodeficiency virus testing: Expanded recommendations. Obstetrics & Gynecology, 104, 1119-1124.

Canadian AIDS Society. (2011). Prenatal HIV Testing: What You Need to Know. Retrieved June 27, 2013 from [http://www.cdn aids.ca/files.nsf/pages/prenatalhivtesting-whatyouneedtoknow/\\$file/Prenatal%20HIV%20Testing-What%20you%20need%20to%20know.pdf](http://www.cdn aids.ca/files.nsf/pages/prenatalhivtesting-whatyouneedtoknow/$file/Prenatal%20HIV%20Testing-What%20you%20need%20to%20know.pdf).

Lab Tests Online. (2013). HIV Antibody. Retrieved June 27, 2013 from <http://labtestsonline.org/understanding/analytes/hiv-antibody/tab/test>.

Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists of Canada. (n.d.). HIV Testing in Pregnancy. Retrieved June 27, 2013 from <http://sogc.org/publications/hiv-testing-in-pregnancy/>.

