

HIV testing in pregnancy

Why should I get tested?

HIV testing is important because if you have HIV, you can receive early treatment to reduce the amount of virus in your body and effectively manage your disease and prevent passing it to other people. A person living with HIV can pass the virus to their baby during pregnancy, childbirth or while breast or chestfeeding. Because of the risk of passing HIV to your baby, it is very important for you to get tested for HIV. If you test positive for HIV, you need to start antiretroviral (ARV) therapy as soon as possible to decrease the risk of mother-to-child transmission. Today, perinatal transmission of HIV in B.C. has been virtually eliminated through routine HIV testing and treatment in pregnancy.

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 get tested for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), including HIV, before having sex without a condom.

When should I get tested during pregnancy?

HIV testing should be provided to all pregnant people, or those planning a pregnancy, and their partners. HIV testing is offered to all pregnant people as part of routine prenatal care, ideally in the first trimester. Repeat testing in each trimester of the pregnancy may be recommended if the risk of exposure is high. 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 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: <https://smartsexresource.com/clinics-testing>.

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, visit [HealthLinkBC File #08m HIV and HIV tests](#).

What are the chances of passing HIV to my baby?

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

You can also pass HIV to your baby when breast or chestfeeding. Health experts do not recommend breast or chestfeeding or expressing your milk and feeding your baby by bottle if you are living with HIV.

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

Some countries do not test for HIV during pregnancy. 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 1-888-711-3030 or visit www.bcwomens.ca/our-services/specialized-services/oak-tree-clinic
- Smart Sex Resource – Clinics and Testing: <https://smartsexresource.com/clinics-testing>

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 - Find health services: www.healthlinkbc.ca/find-care/find-health-services.