

## Where can I get more information about HIV?

There are many ways for you to get more information about being tested, or about what to do if your test result is positive. You can talk to well-informed health professionals or volunteers. Or you can look for information on the Internet.

### **By phone ...**

Good places to call include:

- your doctor's office
- your local public health unit
- a local AIDS service organization or hotline
- the *Motherisk HIV Healthline and Network* (toll-free counselling service for patients, family members, and care providers across Canada) at the Hospital for Sick Children, at **1-888-246-5840**

### **On the Internet ...**

The Internet can be a good source of information, but not all sites are reliable. These are some good sites for you to start with.

From the Canadian Pediatric Society — *Testing for HIV during pregnancy*

**[www.CaringForKids.cps.ca/babies/HIVtesting.htm](http://www.CaringForKids.cps.ca/babies/HIVtesting.htm)**

From the Canadian Public Health Association — *Frequently asked questions about HIV/AIDS*

**[www.clearinghouse.cpha.ca/english/prevent/clearpub/pubse.htm#faqs](http://www.clearinghouse.cpha.ca/english/prevent/clearpub/pubse.htm#faqs)**

From The Body: An AIDS and HIV information resource — *Canadian HIV/AIDS hotlines and service organizations*

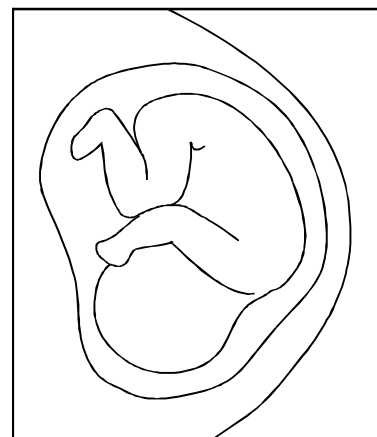
**[www.thebody.com/hotlines/canadian.html](http://www.thebody.com/hotlines/canadian.html)**

From the Ministry of Health of Ontario — *Important news for pregnant women: HIV testing* (Includes names and phone numbers of anonymous testing sites in Ontario)

**[www.gov.on.ca/MOH/english/pub/aids/prenatalhiv.html](http://www.gov.on.ca/MOH/english/pub/aids/prenatalhiv.html)**



**Important  
information for  
pregnant  
women**



Testing for HIV infection is part of routine prenatal care. **All** pregnant women should consider having the test. Even women who think they are not at risk of infection, or who have had the test before.

### **Why should I be tested for HIV?**

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. It passes from person to person through contact with an infected person's blood or body fluid.

Many women who have the virus:

- did not think they were infected
- did not even know they had been at risk
- were infected by having unprotected sex with a male partner
- do not feel sick yet
- only find out that they are infected when they become ill — or have a child diagnosed with HIV

If you are pregnant and have HIV:

- the virus can pass to your baby during pregnancy (in the womb), at birth (labour and delivery), or by breastfeeding
- you can get treatment to reduce the risk of passing the virus to your baby and to help keep yourself well

**The only way to know for sure if you are infected with the virus is to have a blood test!**

## What are the benefits of being tested?

### **Testing negative**

If your test result is negative, you most likely are not infected with HIV, and do not need to worry about having a baby with HIV.

### **Testing positive**

A positive test result means you very likely do have HIV and could pass the virus to your baby unless you take some precautions. These precautions include getting appropriate drug treatment and not breastfeeding your baby.

If you receive no treatment for HIV, your baby will have about a 25% chance (1 in 4) of being infected.

If you receive suitable treatment, the risk could be as low as 2% (2 in 100). With treatment, you can also expect a longer, healthier life yourself.

Even though finding out that you have HIV is difficult, it is important for you to know. It will help you make some important choices that may affect your health, and that of your baby and partner.

## What are the risks of being tested?

### **Testing negative**

A negative HIV test result has no harmful effects. In fact, it can be reassuring. It will not affect your life insurance coverage or other medical benefits.

### **Testing positive**

A positive HIV test result may put stress on you and your relationships. It also may affect your access to life and health insurance, and your plans to immigrate or travel.

## How is the test done?

A small sample of blood is taken from your arm. It often can be taken at the same time as other routine prenatal blood tests. The test is free of charge, and very accurate. It takes about 2 weeks to get the test results.

Your name is usually put on the form used to order your HIV test, but your doctor and the lab will keep your results confidential. Discuss alternatives with your doctor, if you are uncomfortable about using your name.

## What if I don't want to be tested?

Continue to think about having the HIV test. Talk it over with your doctor, partner, family or friends. If you decide later that you want to have the test, tell your doctor.

Remember that it is never too late in the pregnancy to have the HIV test and still decrease the risk for you and your baby. However, sooner is better.

## What if I do want to be tested?

If the result is **negative**, you most likely don't have HIV. (The result may be wrong if you were exposed to the virus less than 3 months before the test. In this case, you should have another test in a few months. If you continue to be at risk, you should be tested again later in pregnancy.)

If the result is **positive**, you most likely do have HIV. If it is **indeterminate**, you *could* have HIV. In either case, the test will be repeated with a new blood sample. You will also be referred to a specialist in HIV treatment who will help you decide what action to take.

## What if I'm not sure what to do?

Consider your choice carefully. You don't have to decide right away; the test can be done later.

Take time to think about the information you have received. Get more information, if you need to. Many excellent resources in your community and on the Internet can help you decide what to do about testing. (See next page.) They can also help you decide what to do after you get your results.