



THE WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE GROUP
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HIV TESTING IN PREGNANCY

HIV can be transmitted from an infected woman to her fetus or newborn during pregnancy, during labor and delivery, and during the postpartum period through breastfeeding.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend testing for HIV for all pregnant women. Through June 1994, the CDC had received reports of more than 51,000 AIDS cases among children who acquired HIV infection perinatally (around the time of birth). Approximately half of all cases among women have been attributed to intravenous (IV) drug use and one-third to heterosexual contact. An increasing proportion of perinatal AIDS cases have been reported among children whose mothers acquired HIV through heterosexual contact with an infected partner whose risk was not known to the mother.

HIV counseling and testing during prenatal care offer important prevention opportunities for both uninfected and infected women and their infants. For uninfected women, such counseling is intended to:

1. assist women in assessing their current or future risk for HIV infection
2. initiate or reinforce HIV risk reduction behavior
3. allow for referral to other HIV prevention service (e.g., substance abuse treatment) when appropriate.

For infected women, knowledge of their HIV infection status provides opportunities for:

1. early diagnosis and treatment for themselves and their infants; testing is important because treatment is available that substantially reduces the rate of transmission of the virus from the mother to the fetus
2. informed reproductive decisions
3. methods to reduce the risk of perinatal transmission
4. information to prevent HIV transmission to others
5. referral for psychological and social services as needed.

HIV testing is strongly recommended; however, you may opt out by checking the appropriate box and signing the attached Consent to HIV Testing. Please read the consent in its entirety; indicate your choice; and bring the consent to your first office visit.