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Does HIV get passed to the baby during pregnancy?



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If you are pregnant and have HIV, there is a 1 in 4 chance that you will pass the virus on to the baby during pregnancy, at birth or while breast-feeding. This is true even if you don't have symptoms. You can, however, reduce the chances of the baby getting HIV during the pregnancy or delivery.

If I am pregnant, should I get tested for HIV?

If you have taken part in any high-risk activities (such as unprotected sex or sharing needles or other drug equipment with someone who is HIV positive or whose HIV status you do not know), you may be infected with HIV (see Question 5 “How do you get HIV (or not get HIV?)”). The only way to know for sure whether you have HIV is to get tested (see Question 22 “Should I get tested for HIV?” and Question 23 “How do I get tested?”). Call your health department or local AIDS organization for information on testing sites in your area or ask your doctor or health care provider.

If you find out you have HIV and you are pregnant, you can take steps to care for yourself and get treatment. You can also choose to:

- take HIV medication during pregnancy to decrease the chances of the baby getting HIV
- continue your pregnancy without medicine for HIV
- end your pregnancy.

You need to discuss your options with a doctor or health care provider. There can be side effects from the HIV drugs for you and possibly for your baby.

Remember, it is your choice whether to be tested for HIV or to be treated with the medications.

After the baby is born:

The baby could get HIV from your breast milk. Talk to your doctor or health care provider about this.

If you (or your partner) have HIV and you want to get pregnant:

Talk to a doctor or health care provider about how you can best protect yourself, your partner and your baby.

For more information, contact your local AIDS service organization or health care practitioner.

For more copies of this fact sheet or other documents on HIV/AIDS, contact the
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