

Information/Consent for HIV Testing in Pregnancy
Adapted from the University of Washington Medical Center

Washington state law requires that all providers of obstetrical care discuss and offer HIV testing to all pregnant women. Please read through the following information and let us know if you are interested in being tested at this time, or at any time during your pregnancy.

What is HIV and how does one get it?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. Most women do not know that they are infected with HIV until late in the disease. People usually get HIV by sharing needles and/or having unprotected sex with someone who has HIV. Latest figures indicate that the highest transmission is through heterosexual contact.

What is the HIV blood test?

The HIV test is a blood test for antibodies and can be done at the same time as other routine prenatal blood tests. If the test is positive you have HIV but not necessarily AIDS. If the test is negative you either do not have HIV or you became HIV positive too recently to tell. If you believe you may still be at risk, we recommend repeat testing within 1 to 6 months.

Why take the test?

Because most people in the U.S. now acquire HIV through heterosexual contact, it is no longer felt that only those with "known risk factors" be tested. And, if a pregnant woman has HIV, she can pass it on to her baby during pregnancy, delivery, or while breastfeeding. If a woman with HIV takes a drug called AZT during pregnancy, there is a much lower chance that she will pass the virus to her baby. AZT is available for little or no cost if you have a low income.

Are there any concerns about HIV testing?

It can be very difficult to wait for HIV test results. Results can take up to 3 weeks. Many people feel stress, anger, or depression. Also, people worry that a positive test result will be used against them. If you have concerns, please discuss them with your midwife.

Privacy of results

Your health care provider will place your HIV test results in your medical record. No other person or company will know your test results without your explicit written permission except as permitted by law. Some agencies offer anonymous testing. If you would like to know more about this option, ask us.

What are your options for testing?

You may have the test now, later, or not at all. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends testing of all pregnant women because of the success of AZT treatment, but it is entirely your choice.