

## What Is HIV?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. Over time, HIV weakens your body and makes it unable to fight off disease. When someone is very sick because of HIV, they may have AIDS.

## How Does Someone Become Infected With HIV?

Most women who have HIV were infected from unprotected sex with a male partner. Without testing, there is no way to tell if a person has HIV or not. A woman may be infected with HIV and not know it, even if she has had only one sexual partner. In some communities and some parts of the world many people are infected with HIV, and the main risk factor is unprotected sex with a male partner.

A woman can also become infected with HIV by sharing needles or other equipment to inject drugs, with someone who has HIV.

## For Women Not Tested For HIV

In 1998, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care developed a Prenatal HIV Testing Program, recommending that health care providers discuss and offer HIV antibody testing to all pregnant women and those planning a pregnancy.

Some leftover blood from other prenatal tests, which would normally be thrown away, may be used for research to determine the rate of HIV infection among women in Ontario. If so, all identifying information (e.g., name and health card number) will be permanently removed and you will not (and cannot) be given the results. If you don't want your blood used in the research study, please tell your physician.

## For More Information Call:

The Ontario AIDS Hotline 1-800-668-2437  
(English and 15 other languages)  
1-800-267-7432 (French)

INFOline 1-877-234-4343  
TTY 1-800-387-5559

The Motherisk HIV Healthline  
1-888-246-5840

Your doctor or local public health unit

Your local AIDS service organization

[www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)  
[www.HealthyOntario.com](http://www.HealthyOntario.com)

Version française disponible  
en communiquant avec le 1 877 234-4343  
ATS 1 800 387-5559

Financial assistance by Health Canada.

## Prenatal HIV Testing



## HIV Testing Is Important For You And Your Baby

## Why Should I Think About HIV Testing Now?

An HIV test early in your pregnancy will give you information to make informed and responsible decisions about your health and the health of your baby.

In addition to other routine blood tests, your health care provider recommends that prenatal care for all pregnant women include HIV testing. You may wish to include your partner in discussions about HIV testing.

### The HIV Test

HIV testing is accurate, free of charge and can be done at the same time as your other prenatal blood tests.

You should be tested if you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant.

If you have any concerns about being tested for HIV, talk to your health care provider. He or she will answer any questions you have.

Your health care provider will not order an HIV test without your consent. If you decide not to take the test, your health care provider will continue to provide you with the same standard of care he / she provides to all of his / her patients.

### Test Results

If your HIV test is **negative**, it is unlikely you are infected with HIV. However, if you have been exposed to any risk for HIV recently, such as unprotected sex or sharing needles or other injection equipment, you should **consider testing again** in three months.

If your test is **positive**, you are infected with HIV. You can pass HIV to your baby without knowing it during pregnancy, labour, delivery and breastfeeding. However, there are effective treatments to help you stay healthy and greatly reduce the chances that you will pass HIV to your baby.

As with many other diseases, positive HIV results are collected by Public Health. If you want to test anonymously, anonymous HIV testing is available across Ontario. See the list of sites in this brochure.

**These questions and answers about HIV testing will help you make the decision that's right for you.**

*I'm sure I'm not at risk for HIV infection. Why should I be tested?*

It's important to be sure. That's why the HIV test and other prenatal tests (hepatitis B, rubella and syphilis) are done routinely.

*Does the test have to be done now or can I think about it?*

If you want to take some time to think about the information you have received from your health care provider, you can wait to be tested. If you decide to be tested for HIV at a later date, remember to ask for the test at your next prenatal appointment, and be sure to ask for the results about two weeks after the test. Or you can arrange to be tested at another site, such as an anonymous testing site.

*How long does it take to get the results of my test?*

It takes about two weeks to get the results. As this waiting period can be a stressful time for many women, we recommend you speak to a counsellor or health worker in your community who can discuss your concerns with you.

*What do I do if I'm positive? What about my baby?*

There are drugs to help you stay healthy for a long time. The same drugs will reduce the chances that you will pass HIV to your baby. With treatment, this chance is reduced to about one to two per cent. Without treatment, there is a 15 to 30 per cent chance you will pass HIV to your baby. A Caesarian section may also reduce the chance of passing HIV to your baby during delivery.

*If I am HIV positive, should I continue with this pregnancy?*

You can get treatment and support to help you stay healthy during your pregnancy and reduce the chances that you will transmit HIV to your baby. You may want to discuss other options with your health care provider.

*How will I tell my partner?*

Sharing this news is complicated and difficult and depends, in part, on the type of relationship you have with your partner. There are caring counsellors and health care providers who can help you make a plan and support you to act on it. Begin by asking your health care provider for help.

*Will a positive HIV test affect my immigration status or my ability to travel?*

A positive test may affect your plans to immigrate or travel and your access to life insurance. Some of your personal relationships may also be affected.

## Anonymous HIV Testing

If you are concerned about your name being used in HIV testing, you can be tested at one of Ontario's anonymous HIV testing sites. This means your test result is not known by anyone unless you tell them. Your health care provider cannot provide you with an anonymous HIV test. Only certain clinics are designated as anonymous testing sites.

## Anonymous HIV Testing Sites In Ontario

Algoma Health Unit	705-541-7100
Anishnawbe Health Toronto	416-360-0486
Bay Centre for Birth Control, Women's College Hospital	416-351-3700
Birth Control & Venereal Disease Information Centre	416-789-4541
Central Toronto Community Health Centres	416-703-8482
Centre francophone de Toronto	416-922-2672
Centretown Community Health Centre	613-563-2437
City of Hamilton Public Health and Community Services Department	905-528-5894
Toronto Public Health	416-338-7600
Elgin-St. Thomas Health Unit	519-631-9971
Hassle Free Clinic, Women's clinic: Men's clinic:	416-922-0566 416-922-0603
Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox and Addington Health Unit	613-549-1232
London InterCommunity Health Centre	519-673-4427
Ottawa Public Health Department	613-563-2437
Peel Health Department	905-799-7700
Region of Waterloo Public Health	519-883-2251
Regional Niagara Public Health Department	905-688-3817
Rexdale Community Health Centre	416-744-0066
Sandy Hill Community Health Centre	613-563-2437
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit	705-721-7520
Somerset West Community Health Centre	613-563-2437
Sudbury and District Health Unit	705-522-9200
Thunder Bay District Health Unit	807-625-5981
Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit	519-821-2370 ext. 2235
Windsor-Essex County Health Unit	519-258-2146
Windsor Regional Hospital, Metropolitan Campus	519-254-6115