

Antenatal Screening
free health checks during pregnancy

HIV testing in pregnancy

part of antenatal blood tests



HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that affects the body's ability to fight infection. It can lead to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) if left undetected and untreated.

The number of people with HIV in New Zealand is low. However that number is increasing and so all pregnant women are being offered an HIV test as part of their antenatal care. A woman with HIV can pass the virus on to others including her baby during pregnancy, birth or through breastmilk.

The HIV test will be done at the same time as other routine antenatal blood tests (blood group and Rhesus factor, full blood count, hepatitis B, rubella and syphilis). One sample of blood can be used for all the tests.

All of these tests are free to most women.



Informed consent

As with your other antenatal tests it is important that you have enough information to help you decide about having the test.

If you have concerns or want to know more about the HIV test, talk with your GP, midwife or specialist. You may also want to discuss it with your partner, family or whānau.

You have the right to choose not to have any of the tests.



Why have an HIV test?

Most pregnant women with HIV do not know they have the infection. The test is the only way to tell.

A woman who finds she has HIV is able to get early treatment and support for herself, her partner, family or whānau and help reduce the risk of passing the virus to her baby.

The majority of pregnant women will be found not to have HIV.



How accurate is the test?

The test is very accurate. However, a small number of women may have an unclear result and may need to have a second blood test. In most cases the second test will give a negative result.



How will I get my results?

The health professional who organised your blood tests will give you your results.

If a woman's HIV test is positive, professional advice, help and support will be given to help look after her health, her baby's health and that of her partner, family or whānau. Pregnant women with HIV will be referred for specialist consultant care and treatment.



How effective is the treatment?

Treatment to prevent HIV being passed on to the baby is very effective. Without treatment there is about a 25% chance the baby will be born with HIV. With treatment, the chance of the baby being born with HIV is less than 1%.

Early treatment and support is important for women who have HIV as it helps them remain well.



What is the treatment?

Pregnant women with HIV will usually be offered a combination of treatment and interventions including:

- medicines during pregnancy and birth to help women stay healthy for longer, and to prevent them from passing the virus on to the baby
- advice about safe delivery methods
- medicines for the baby which will be offered for a few weeks after birth. Current international evidence suggests that the drug treatment before and after birth causes no harm in babies
- advice about the safest feeding methods for the baby.

What about confidentiality?

All of your antenatal blood test results including HIV will be sent in confidence to your GP or Lead Maternity Carer and to your local District Health Board (DHB).

Even when you choose not to have an HIV test you will be asked if the DHB can be informed of your choice. This information is used to monitor the safety and effectiveness of the programme, regardless of the choice that you make.

Your personal details are carefully protected.

The Ministry of Health collects information for monitoring and evaluation of the screening programme.

The Antenatal HIV Screening Programme is overseen by the National Screening Unit of the Ministry of Health. The Programme aims to detect HIV in pregnant women to reduce the number of babies born with HIV.

For more information:

- visit the National Screening Unit's website: www.nsu.govt.nz
- talk to your GP, midwife or specialist
- visit the New Zealand AIDS Foundation website: www.nzaf.org.nz
- visit Positive Women Inc website: www.positivewomen.org.nz



New Zealand Government

This resource is available from www.healthed.govt.nz or the Authorised Provider at your local DHB.