

This information is for you if you are pregnant and have a positive test result for HIV

This information is about:

- being HIV-positive when you are pregnant and after you have had your baby;
- ways to reduce the risk of HIV being passed to your baby; and
- the monitoring and treatment which is available to you.

What your blood test result means

Your HIV-positive result means that at some time you have acquired the HIV virus (that is, the virus was passed to you)..

What is HIV?

HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system (the body's defence system). Without treatment, over time (usually many years) the immune system becomes weaker, meaning that the body becomes less able to protect itself against serious illnesses.

There is very effective treatment available which means you can expect to live as long as anyone else.

Knowing you have the infection means that you can be monitored and supported by a specialist team and receive treatment when you need it. This can improve your health.

Without treatment HIV can pass from mother to child. This could happen during pregnancy, when giving birth or while breastfeeding.

By knowing you are HIV-positive and by taking the steps listed in this document, the chance of HIV passing to your baby is less than 0.3% (one in 300).

How am I HIV positive?

HIV can be passed on in the following ways.

- A mother who has HIV, passing the infection to their baby during pregnancy, when giving birth or by breastfeeding. If you have other children, your HIV specialist will talk to you about whether they should be offered testing.
- Having condomless sex (sex without an external condom worn on the penis or internal condom worn in the vagina) with someone who has HIV.
- Being given a blood transfusion or blood products containing HIV. Blood and blood products have been tested for HIV in the UK since 1985, but might not have been tested in other countries around the world.
- Sharing needles or equipment for injecting drugs with someone who has HIV.
- Using unclean needles in body-piercing, tattooing or for medical reasons outside the UK.
- Being scratched by used needles and other sharp items which might have blood on them (sometimes called a 'needle stick injury').

HIV is not passed to other people through everyday social contact, for example, going shopping, being with friends and family, eating meals together or kissing.

What will happen next?

You will be offered an appointment at a specialist clinic for a full health check-up and assessment (or review) of the stage of your HIV infection. They will continue to see you regularly, during pregnancy and after your baby is born.

Your midwife will also help you to plan your care and discuss your choices with you.

Monitoring the HIV infection

A number of blood tests are used to check the HIV infection. These are:

- CD4 count – a measure of your immune system; and
- viral load – the level of HIV in your blood.

Treatment for you

You will be recommended treatment during your pregnancy and when you give birth. This is to:

- help keep you in the best health possible; and
- help to prevent the infection being passed to the baby during pregnancy and the birth.

HIV treatment prevents the growth of the virus so it reduces the amount in your bloodstream (the viral load). With treatment, people living with HIV can live as long as anyone else. They also avoid passing the virus on to anyone else.

You will be offered treatment during your pregnancy. It is recommended that you continue with this treatment after your baby is born.

If you have any worries, it is important that you discuss them with the HIV specialist team. Remember that there is always help and support for you.

What can I do to protect my baby from HIV?

Without steps being taken, about 25% to 40% of babies (25 to 40 in 100) born to a mother who has HIV will have the infection.

If you take the steps listed below, the chance of your baby having HIV is less than 0.3% (one in 300).

1 Drug treatment in pregnancy and when you give birth

You will be recommended treatment during your pregnancy and when you give birth.

2 Delivery

If your HIV is well controlled and you have an uncomplicated pregnancy, your choices for delivery will not be affected by HIV.

3 Feeding your baby

Breastfeeding is not recommended to women who are HIV-positive as HIV can be passed to your baby in breast milk. Before your baby is born, your HIV specialist team will talk to you about feeding your baby.

It is recommended that free formula milk is available to women who are HIV-positive in Wales. You should give your baby formula milk until they are about 12 months old.

4 Treatment for your baby

Anti-HIV medicine will be prescribed for your baby up to the first four weeks after birth. This medicine will give your baby extra protection against HIV infection. Your baby may also be prescribed antibiotics.

HIV testing and treatment for your baby

Your baby will normally be offered an appointment at a paediatric (children's) clinic that has special skills in managing HIV. The specialist nurse or doctor will discuss tests and treatment for your baby with you.

If the results of the blood tests your baby had soon after birth, at six weeks of age and at 12 weeks of age are negative and you are not breastfeeding, your baby should not have HIV. If your baby still has a negative test result when they are 18 months old, it will be certain that they do not have HIV. This

is because your baby may carry your antibodies to HIV until they are this age. An HIV test cannot tell the difference between your antibodies (passed to your baby before birth) and antibodies produced by your child because they have HIV infection.

Who needs to know that I have HIV?

For you and your baby to have the best care, it is necessary for you to receive care from a number of specialists—for example, the HIV clinic team, an obstetrician (hospital doctor) and a paediatrician (baby and child doctor).

Your GP will be aware of other health issues you may have and medicines you take. If they know that you have HIV, this can avoid interactions between HIV medication and other drugs they may prescribe.

Your information will not be shared with others without your permission. You may want to ask your HIV specialist about how to explain your positive test results to your partner. If your partner does not know whether they have HIV, you should use condoms to prevent you from passing the virus to them. Your partner should consider getting tested for HIV.

Where can I get more information?

- The hospital midwife who specialises in antenatal screening or the hospital doctor (obstetrician).
- Your nearest NHS sexual health clinic—you can phone your local hospital and ask for the sexual health clinic.
- You may want to talk to other women who have HIV. The Terrence Higgins Trust can help arrange this.

The Terrence Higgins Trust

Phone: 0808 802 1221 (national helpline)

Website: www.tht.org.uk



Terrence Higgins Trust Cymru

Phone: 02920 666 465

Email: cymru-wales@tht.org.uk

National Sexual Health Helpline

Freephone: 0300 1237123

The Sexual Health helpline is open from 9am to 8pm, Monday to Friday.

Positively UK

Phone: 020 7713 0444 (10am to 4pm Monday to Friday)

Email: info@positivelyuk.org

Website: www.positivelyuk.org

AVERT

Email: info@avert.org

Website: www.avert.org

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phw.nhs.wales/antenatal-screening

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