About Rapid HIV Antibody Testing

Helping you understand the test

Obstetric (OB) and pediatric providers at University of Washington Medical Center recommend an HIV antibody test for all pregnant women, whether or not you think you are at risk. If you did not get a test while you were pregnant, or you want to be tested again, we can give you a rapid HIV test right now in Labor and Delivery.

What is a rapid HIV test?

A rapid HIV test is a blood test for HIV antibodies that can be done quickly. You’ll get results in about an hour. This is much faster than the regular test, which can take several days.

Why should I have the rapid HIV test?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. It causes a serious infection that could affect your health and your baby’s health. There is no cure for HIV, but there are treatments to slow the progress of the disease.

If you have HIV:

- You can pass the virus to your baby during pregnancy and delivery, and while breastfeeding.
- Even if you don’t find out you have HIV until you’re in labor, we can help lower the risk to your baby by giving you and your baby medicine. The medicine decreases the risk so your baby has only a 1 in 12 chance of getting HIV from you.
- We will talk with you about your birth plan and work with you to lower the risk of your baby getting HIV during delivery.
- We strongly recommend that you DO NOT breastfeed your baby. Breastfeeding increases the risk of your baby getting HIV.
How do I know if I am at risk to have HIV?

The most common ways to give HIV to another person is through blood, semen, vaginal fluid, and breast milk. You may be at risk for HIV if you have:

- Had unprotected sex.
- Shared needles or snorting devices for recreational drug use.
- Had exposure to the blood of another person in any way.

Having an HIV test does not mean you don’t trust your partner. It just means you want to know everything you can to keep you and your baby as healthy as possible.

What does it mean if I have a negative test result?

- It means that antibodies to HIV were not detected in your blood and that you are probably not infected. Because it takes the body between 2 weeks and 3 months to develop antibodies, a person who was recently infected may test negative.

- If you and/or your partner have engaged in risky behavior within the last 3 months, ask your provider for a follow-up test in 4 to 6 weeks. Risky behavior includes:
  - Having a new sex partner (by choice or force).
  - Injecting or snorting recreational drugs.
  - Being exposed to someone else’s blood.

- If you and your partner have not engaged in risky behavior in the last 3 months, you can be confident in the negative test result.

- If your test is negative, you will not be started on medicine during labor and delivery.

- A negative test does not mean that you are immune to HIV. Through risky behavior, you and/or your partner can still get HIV.

What does it mean if I have a positive test result?

- We will do a second test to confirm the positive results. The results from the second test will be ready in about a week.

- We will recommend that you and your baby take medicine just in case the second result is also positive. Once you agree, you will receive medicine during labor and delivery until the umbilical cord is cut after delivery. The baby will continue the medicine for 6 weeks unless the second test results come back negative.
Questions?

Call 206-598-4616

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help at during regular clinic hours.

Labor and Delivery: 206-598-4616

- Your doctor or midwife will discuss your birth plan with you and may suggest changes, such as having a Cesarean section.
- We ask that you not start breastfeeding until after you know the results of the second test. The nurses will help you learn how to pump your breasts until after the second results come back.
- We will take a sample of blood from your baby at 12 to 48 hours and store it until we know the results of the second test.

What will happen when the results from the second test come back?

Your doctor or midwife will make an appointment for you to come in to talk about the results from the second HIV test.

If the results are negative:
- Your baby can stop taking the medicine.
- You can consider breastfeeding.
- We suggest another HIV test in 4 to 6 weeks.

If the second results are positive:
- Your baby should continue to take the medicine.
- We will refer both you and your baby to specialists for follow-up testing and care.
- We will analyze the sample of your baby’s blood that was taken right after birth to see if he or she has HIV.
- The law requires us to report your results confidentially to the Seattle/King County Public Health Department (SKCPHD).
- You or someone from SKCPHD will need to tell your sexual and/or drug-sharing partners. The Health Department can do this without using your name.

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