

Pregnancy and Infections

Vaginal infections have been linked with pregnancy in the tubes (ectopic pregnancy), preterm labor, babies born too early, and Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (an infection in the uterus and tubes) that can lead to problems getting pregnant in the future. Babies born early have a much higher chance of dying within the first year of life. Since over 50 percent of pregnancies in Oklahoma are not planned, it is important for you to take steps to avoid getting an infection or, if you have an infection, to get treated as soon as possible.

If you are planning a pregnancy or are pregnant and have ever had more than one sex partner or have a partner that has had or currently has more than one sex partner, please ask your healthcare provider to test you early in your pregnancy. Most likely your insurance will pay for testing.

If you change partners during your pregnancy or suspect your partner has other partner(s), please ask your healthcare provider to test again during the pregnancy. The testing is simple and often the infection is curable before delivery. This will increase the chances for a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV): Vaginal infection is common in sexually active women but is not sexually transmitted. This infection is associated with preterm labor, premature birth and uterine infection if not treated. With this infection you may notice an increase in vaginal discharge and a fishy odor. More than half of all women with this infection do not have any symptoms.



The following infections are sexually transmitted and both you and your partner need to be treated:

Chlamydia: Chlamydia is the most common sexually transmitted infection. Both you and your partner could have this infection and not know it. You might have an increased discharge, pain with sex or bleeding after sex. Untreated Chlamydia infections in pregnant women can cause serious eye and lung infections in babies after they are born.

Gonorrhea: Gonorrhea is the second most commonly reported sexually transmitted infection. This infection can cause the same symptoms as Chlamydia or cause no symptoms at all. A pregnant woman can transmit the infection to her baby during delivery causing blindness, joint infection or a life threatening blood infection.

Herpes: Genital Herpes is a sexually transmitted infection that usually causes blisters in the genital area and flu-like symptoms. The blisters or “outbreaks” can come back at any time after the first infection. A pregnant woman with blisters during the last few weeks of pregnancy, can pass the infection to her baby. Herpes infections can cause death in newborns.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV): HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. This virus may be passed from one person to another through infected blood, semen, vaginal secretions, or breast milk. HIV can be sexually transmitted or can be transmitted from mother to baby during pregnancy. It is very important that you know your HIV status. Every pregnant woman should receive HIV testing early in her pregnancy and again before delivery. A pregnant woman with HIV can reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to her baby to as low as 2 percent with proper care and treatment from a physician. However, without treatment the risk of transmission from you to your baby is 25 percent. As a pregnant mom making healthy decisions for you and your unborn baby, knowing your HIV status is vital.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV): HPV infection is a sexually transmitted infection causing genital warts and cervical cancer. This infection is caused by a group of viruses with more than 100 different strains or types. A baby exposed to one of these viruses during delivery can develop warts in the throat or voice box.

Syphilis: Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection, but many people infected with syphilis do not have any symptoms for years. This bacterium can cross the placenta and infect a baby

before it is born. An infected baby may be born dead or may be born without signs of infection but develop serious problems within a few weeks (learning problems, seizures, or death).

Hepatitis B: Hepatitis B is a virus that attacks the liver. All women should be tested for this virus when they have their prenatal lab work done. Most women who have Hepatitis B do not even know they are sick. There are many ways you can get Hepatitis B. You may have gotten it from your mother when you were a baby. It can be transmitted sexually or through blood or blood products. It can also be transmitted if you use intravenous drugs or “shoot up”.

If you have the virus, your baby will need to be given the Hepatitis B vaccine at birth and another shot, called HBIG that helps the baby’s immune system. If your baby receives these shots there is less than a 15 percent chance your baby will become infected.

Trichomoniasis (Trich): Trich is a common sexually transmitted infection. With this infection, you may have an increased yellow-green vaginal discharge with itching and a foul odor. Pregnant women with Trich may have babies who are born early or weigh less than five pounds.



For more information on HIV, call the Perinatal HIV Hotline/National Perinatal HIV Consultation and Referral Service at 1-888-448-8765 or the National HIV Testing Resources at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC-Info, 24 hours/day) at 1-800-232-4636 or visit <http://www.hivtest.org>.



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<http://iio.health.ok.gov>
Maternal and Child Health Service - Oklahoma State Department of Health
1000 Northeast Tenth Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73117-1299
Phone 405-271-4480 Fax 405-271-2944

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