

# STDs during Pregnancy - CDC Fact Sheet



**If you are pregnant, you can become infected with the same sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) as women who are not pregnant. Pregnant women should ask their doctors about getting tested for STDs, since some doctors do not routinely perform these tests).**

A critical component of appropriate prenatal care is ensuring that pregnant patients are tested for STDs. Test your pregnant patients for STDs starting early in their pregnancy and repeat close to delivery, as needed. To ensure that the correct tests are being performed, we encourage you to have open, honest conversations with your pregnant patients and, when possible, their sex partners about symptoms they have experienced or are currently experiencing and any high-risk sexual behaviors in which they engage.

The following sections provide details on the effects of specific STDs during a woman's pregnancy with links to web pages with additional information

## **I'm pregnant. Can I get an STD?**

Yes, you can. Women who are pregnant can become infected with the same STDs as women who are not pregnant. Pregnancy does not provide women or their babies any additional protection against STDs. Many STDs are 'silent,' or have no symptoms, so you may not know if you are infected. If you are pregnant, you should be tested for STDs, including HIV (the virus that causes AIDS), as a part of your medical care during pregnancy. The results of an STD can be more serious, even life-threatening, for you and your baby if you become infected while pregnant. It is important that you are aware of the harmful effects of STDs and how to protect yourself and your unborn baby against infection. If you are diagnosed with an STD while pregnant, your sex partner(s) should also be tested and treated.

## **How can STDs affect me and my unborn baby?**

STDs can complicate your pregnancy and may have serious effects on both you and your developing baby. Some of these problems may be seen at birth; others may not be discovered until months or years later. In addition, it is well known that infection with an STD can make it easier for a person to get infected with HIV. Most of these problems can be prevented if you receive regular medical care during pregnancy. This includes tests for STDs starting early in pregnancy and repeated close to delivery, as needed.

## **Should I be tested for STDs during my pregnancy?**

Yes. Testing and treating pregnant women for STDs is a vital way to prevent serious health complications to both mother and baby that may otherwise happen with infection. The sooner you begin receiving medical care during pregnancy, the better the health outcomes will be for you and your unborn baby. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2015 STD Treatment

Guidelines recommend screening pregnant women for STDs. The CDC screening recommendations that your health care provider should follow are incorporated into the table on the STDs during Pregnancy – Detailed CDC Fact Sheet <http://www.cdc.gov/std/pregnancy/stdfact-pregnancy-detailed.htm>.

Be sure to ask your doctor about getting tested for STDs. It is also important that you have an open, honest conversation with your provider and discuss any symptoms you are experiencing and any high-risk sexual behavior that you engage in, since some doctors do not routinely perform these tests. Even if you have been tested in the past, you should be tested again when you become pregnant.

### **Can I get treated for an STD while I'm pregnant?**

It depends. STDs, such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, trichomoniasis and BV can all be treated and cured with antibiotics that are safe to take during pregnancy. STDs that are caused by viruses, like genital herpes, hepatitis B, or HIV cannot be cured. However, in some cases these infections can be treated with antiviral medications or other preventive measures to reduce the risk of passing the infection to your baby. If you are pregnant or considering pregnancy, you should be tested so you can take steps to protect yourself and your baby.

### **How can I reduce my risk of getting an STD while pregnant?**

The only way to avoid STDs is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

If you are sexually active, you can do the following things to lower your chances of getting chlamydia:

- Being in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and has negative STD test results;
- Using latex condoms the right way every time you have sex.

## **Related Content**

**Congenital Syphilis Fact Sheet**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/stdfact-congenital-syphilis.htm>

**Pregnancy and HIV, Viral Hepatitis, and STD Prevention**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/pregnancy/default.htm>

**Sexually Transmitted Diseases - Information from CDC**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/>