

## HEPATITIS B

A blood test will detect this viral infection of the liver. If you have hepatitis B, there is a risk that your baby will be infected. If your infection is known, your baby can be given treatment at birth that will help prevent infection.

### Other facts about hepatitis B

- You can get hepatitis B any time during pregnancy if you have sex without a condom with someone who has hepatitis B (they may not know it or feel sick) or if you share needles used for drugs, body piercing, or tattooing with someone who is infected.
- Use a condom to help protect yourself. Do not share needles or other injection drug equipment.
- A vaccine is available to prevent hepatitis B.

### What if I am pregnant and have hepatitis B?

- You can improve your own health by getting early medical care.
- Rest, eat well and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- After your baby is born, your baby will require hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG), as well as the hepatitis B vaccine series, to help prevent baby from getting hepatitis B.

## OTHER PRENATAL TESTS

The tests described in this brochure are only those that test for infection in early pregnancy. Additional prenatal blood tests are commonly recommended. Other tests for infection may be done later in pregnancy. Talk to your doctor or midwife for more information.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you need more information or help, you can talk to your doctor or midwife or call:

**Health Link Alberta**  
1-866-408-LINK (5465)

**STD/HIV Information Line**  
1-800-772-2437

**HIV (and Pregnancy) Help Line**  
1-888-246-5840

**Canadian Liver Foundation - Alberta**  
(for information on hepatitis)  
1-888-557-5516

Or Visit the Alberta Health and Wellness  
Web site at:

[www.health.gov.ab.ca](http://www.health.gov.ab.ca)



# Pregnant?

## INFORMATION ON ROUTINE TESTS FOR INFECTIONS

*A mother's infection can harm her baby.*

*Early detection means that steps can be taken to reduce the risk of harm to you and your baby.*



As part of good prenatal care for you and your baby, several routine tests are recommended. These tests include screening for infection with **hepatitis B**, **syphilis**, and **HIV**, and testing for immunity to **rubella** and **chickenpox**. Information about these tests is found in this brochure.

## CHICKENPOX

Chickenpox is caused by a virus and is a common childhood illness in Canada. Having chickenpox during pregnancy can harm your baby. Also, chickenpox can be severe in adults. Tell your doctor if you have had chickenpox or been vaccinated. If you are uncertain, a blood test can be done to find out. If you are not immune (protected), a vaccine can be safely given to you **after** the baby is born to prevent future infection.

### *Other facts about chickenpox:*

- Once you have had chickenpox, it would be unlikely that you would get it again.
- If the blood test shows you are protected against chickenpox, your immunity will protect your baby from chickenpox during pregnancy.
- Since 2002, a vaccine to help protect against chickenpox disease is available in Alberta.

### *What if I am pregnant and not protected against chickenpox?*

If you are pregnant now, you **cannot** receive the chickenpox vaccine. Try to avoid contact with chickenpox and contact your doctor right away if you are exposed to chickenpox. Get vaccinated **after** your pregnancy is over.

## RUBELLA (German Measles)

Rubella is a disease caused by a virus. Having rubella during pregnancy can seriously harm your baby. A blood test will show whether you have had rubella or been vaccinated.

### *Other facts about rubella*

- Since 1982, most children in Alberta receive a vaccine, which provides protection against measles, mumps and rubella.

### *What if I am pregnant and not protected against rubella?*

If you are pregnant now, you **cannot** receive the rubella vaccine. Try to avoid contact with rubella and contact your doctor right away if you are exposed to it. Get vaccinated **after** the pregnancy is over to prevent future infection.

## SYPHILIS

A blood test can tell if you have been exposed to this disease. It can be treated with antibiotics but if not treated immediately, a pregnant woman with syphilis can pass it on to her baby, sometimes causing miscarriage, stillbirth, birth defects or low birth weight.

### *Other facts about syphilis infection*

- You can get syphilis any time during pregnancy if you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has syphilis (they may not know it or feel sick). Using a condom helps protect you, but syphilis sores can be on areas not covered by a condom.
- Having syphilis in the past does not protect you from getting it again.

### *What if I am pregnant and have syphilis?*

- Medicine will be prescribed for you to treat syphilis. Once you have received treatment, blood tests will be repeated to make sure syphilis has been cured.

## HIV

HIV is an infection that can be passed on to your baby during pregnancy, at delivery or during breastfeeding. You can have HIV for years and not know it or feel sick. To get early help for yourself and your baby, you need to know for sure by getting tested. A blood test for HIV is considered a part of good routine screening for pregnant women in Alberta. As with other blood tests, you have a right to choose to be tested or not. Please advise your doctor or midwife if you do not wish to be tested. Your choice will not affect the prenatal care you receive.

### *Other facts about HIV infection*

- HIV is short for human immune deficiency virus, the virus that causes AIDS.
- The number of women who are infected with HIV is increasing.
- You could get HIV at any time during pregnancy if you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has HIV (they may not know it or feel sick) or if you share needles used for drugs, body piercing, or tattooing with someone who is infected.
- Use a condom to help protect yourself. Do not share needles or other injection drug equipment.

### *What if the test is negative?*

- It means you are not infected with HIV or it has not yet shown up in your blood. It usually takes about 4 to 8 weeks after you are infected with HIV for signs of it to show up in your blood. You may need to be tested again.

### *What if I am pregnant and have HIV?*

- You can improve your own health by getting early care.
- You can reduce the chance of your baby getting HIV by taking HIV drugs during pregnancy and labour.
- After your baby is born, your baby can be given special drugs for HIV.
- HIV can be passed from you to baby during breastfeeding. HIV positive women should not breastfeed.