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## **Protecting Yourself and Your Baby**

If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, you need to know about HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Pregnancy is a time to take care of yourself and get regular medical checkups for your health and your baby's health. Your health care provider will ask you questions and check you for conditions so that you and your baby can be as healthy as possible. As part of your routine prenatal care or when you are in labor and delivery, you will be tested for HIV unless you decline. HIV testing during pregnancy is the best choice for you and your baby.

### **What is HIV?**

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a disease that weakens the immune system, making it hard for the body to fight infections.

### **How is HIV transmitted?**

HIV is primarily spread by having unprotected sex or sharing needles with an HIV-infected person. Most women in the US have been infected with HIV through sex with men.

A pregnant woman who is HIV infected or who has AIDS can pass HIV to her baby during pregnancy, delivery, and while breastfeeding.

### **How will an HIV test help my baby?**

An HIV test will help you and your baby by alerting you to the need for treatment if your HIV test is positive. Treatment during pregnancy, labor and delivery can help decrease the risk of transmitting HIV to your baby.

Doctors have learned that if you are infected with HIV, treatment with appropriate medication can greatly reduce your chances of giving HIV to your baby.

### **What if I test HIV positive?**

If you are HIV positive, you will want to discuss treatment options with your health care provider. They will likely recommend medication that is considered safe in pregnancy. You may be encouraged to continue the medication after delivery for your own health, depending on a number of factors.

### **You can protect yourself from HIV by:**

- Using a latex/polyurethane condom (male or female) when you have sex even if you are pregnant. Use only water-based lubricants. Oil-based lubricants will weaken condoms and make them less effective.
- Not sharing needles for injecting drugs, steroids, vitamins, tattooing, or piercing.

### **Other resources for help:**

Call the California HIV/AIDS Hotline at 1-800-367-2437 (AIDS) for HIV referral and consultation resources including experts of prenatal HIV treatment in your local area.