

Testing your baby for HIV

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After birth, your baby will be tested for HIV. This page explains the testing process and provides information about what to do if your baby is HIV positive.

How do I know if my baby is HIV positive?

Your baby will be given a simple blood test after birth called a PCR test. This test looks for the presence of HIV in your baby's blood, and if HIV is not detected this is a good indication that your baby does not have HIV.

PCR tests are scheduled within 24-48 hours after birth, then at ages; one week, six weeks, three months, six months, 12 months and finally 18 months. (Some hospitals may vary this slightly, such as testing at week four rather than week one.) If all tests in the first three months are negative, it is extremely unlikely that your baby is infected.

What if my baby has HIV?

This will be very difficult for you. You (and your partner if you are partnered) will need a lot of support and it is important that you are provided with referrals to professional services (counsellors, mental health professionals, support groups and other positive women) to help you cope.

You will need to make a decision about treatment together with the paediatrician. There is some debate about the best time to begin [ARV](#) [1]A medication or other substance which is active against retroviruses such as HIV. treatment for babies – whether to start straight away or to wait until your baby shows immune decline or symptoms or markers that suggest he or she is at risk of HIV progression. Children under one are at risk of progression to AIDS without treatment, but on the matter of whether to treat all babies from birth, expert opinion is divided. If you feel very uncertain about the best way to proceed, your paediatrician and your HIV doctor should talk with you both about all the available evidence and about how this applies to your baby.

If your baby doesn't commence ARV immediately, your baby will need to take drugs to prevent common infections like PCP.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/122>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/treat-yourself-right/pregnancy/feeding-your-new-baby>

[3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/treat-yourself-right/pregnancy>

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/treat-yourself-right/pregnancy/looking-after-yourself>