

Screening for HIV During Prenatal Care is Important

Explain to your patient that you are not singling her out.
Assure her that HIV testing is an important part of routine prenatal care in your practice.
Your patients trust your judgment.

If the patient refuses, encourage her to tell you why. This may be uncomfortable, but it is in line with current recommendations. Following are possible responses to common reasons for refusal.

Patient Says...	Your Response...
If your patient doesn't think she has HIV...	"That may be the case, but the only way to know for sure is to be tested."
If she's worried that someone will find out about her HIV status...	"That's a very common concern, but we're required by law to keep all your medical records confidential and we take that responsibility very seriously."
If she thinks nothing can be done for her or her baby if her test is positive...	"While that may have been true in the past, now there are a lot of new drugs and therapies available that greatly reduce the chances of passing HIV onto your baby and they can keep you healthy for a long time."
If she thinks she doesn't need retesting...because she had a negative result in the past...	"Knowing your current HIV status is the best way to keep you and your baby healthy."
If she has a fear of needles...	"I hear that a lot. Since there are other routine blood tests we need to do, we can include the HIV test, so we'll only have to stick you once."
If she's concerned about job loss, the loss of personal relationships, or even domestic violence...	"Tell me more about some of your concerns and we'll do what we can to help." Talk through relevant issues with her; then, if necessary, direct her to the appropriate services for additional assistance.
If she thinks testing won't be covered by her health plan...	"Because of the recent advances in care, most insurance plans cover HIV screening during pregnancy. If you don't have insurance, there are programs that offer free HIV testing."

It's never too late to test.

If your patient refuses screening at early prenatal visits, be sure to readdress the issue throughout the pregnancy. CDC recommends routine, rapid HIV testing, with patient notification and right of refusal (opt-out), for women who arrive at labor and delivery without a documented prenatal HIV test.



