

## **HIV Counseling and Testing in the Delivery Setting Provider Guide to Counseling**

### **Eligibility**

Pregnant women in labor and delivery settings who have no documentation of HIV testing on prenatal record or no history of prenatal care.

### **How to Use This Guide:**

- The guide was written to help you counsel women in labor. Background information/instructions are in regular type, words you can use are in *italics*.
- It is important to show empathy while you are counseling the laboring woman - through your body language and/or through holding her hand/touch.
- Tell the woman she should signal you when a contraction is happening, so you can pause until it is over.
- Pause to verify understanding. Adjust your terminology as needed.
- Tell the woman that the discussion and what she decides about HIV testing will be kept confidential.

Before discussing HIV testing, insure that the woman is between contractions, that she is fairly comfortable, and that she is alone (no family member or significant other is present in the room, or within hearing). Tell the mother that you are going to talk to her about HIV testing, and ask if she wants her partner or family member to be present.

### **Introduction**

*New Jersey law mandates that all pregnant women be counseled about HIV infection and be offered the HIV/AIDS test. In our hospital, we follow this recommendation because so much can be done to protect the baby from HIV infection.*

*We have no record that you had an HIV test during this pregnancy.*

*Have you been tested for HIV infection in this pregnancy?*  Yes  No

*Do you already know if you have HIV infection?*  Yes  No  Do not know

### ***I have four things I am going to talk to you about***

- *A special HIV/AIDS test*
- *Why this test is important for you and your baby*
- *How HIV is transmitted*
- *What happens when the test result comes back*

### A special HIV/AIDS test

- *It is important for you and your baby that we offer you what is called “rapid” HIV test. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS*
- *This test can give us results **quickly***
- *It is a blood test. It is **voluntary** and your consent is required before the test can be done.*

### Why the test is important

- *HIV can be passed from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, at delivery, and through breast-feeding.*
- *If you **have** HIV infection, rapid testing will allow you to get medication during labor and delivery to reduce the risk of passing HIV to your baby.*
- *Your baby will receive the same medication after birth.*
- ***Without treatment**, the chance the baby will be infected is about 25%, or 1 in 4.*
- *We **know** if women are given medication during labor and delivery and their babies get the medication right after birth, we can reduce the risk of HIV transmission to about 10%, or about 1 in 10 babies.*

### What is HIV and how is it transmitted?

- *Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is the virus that causes AIDS*
- *HIV is a **serious** illness that can affect a woman’s health and her baby’s health.*
- *One of the ways HIV is spread is by unprotected sexual intercourse. Therefore, **all** pregnant women may be at risk for HIV infection.*
- *HIV can be passed from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, at delivery, and through breastfeeding.*

### What happens when the rapid test result comes back?

- *You will receive a **preliminary** result about an hour after your blood is drawn.*
- *If the rapid HIV test is **negative**, no further testing is needed at this time. It **most likely means** that you do not have HIV. However, the test may **not** show recent infection.*
- *If the rapid test is negative it is OK to breast feed your baby.*

### If the rapid HIV test is positive

- *You **may** have HIV infection and your baby **may** have been exposed to HIV*
- *The test is a **screening** test and it is not perfect.*
- *We always do a second test to confirm rapid tests that are positive*
- ***But it may be best** to start treatment to help prevent transmission of HIV to your baby, while we wait for the confirmatory test result*
- *We need your permission to start medications if the preliminary test is positive*
- *Experts recommend several medicines to reduce the chance your baby will get HIV. One is called AZT and we give it in your IV fluids into your vein. The other is a pill called nevirapine.*
- *Your doctor will decide which medicines will be best for you and your baby.*

- *After your baby is born, he/she will start taking AZT syrup.*
- *These medicines have been studied for the past 3 years in pregnant women and newborns and there have been no serious side effects.*
- *Side effects that may occur with AZT are: vomiting, headache, feeling tired, anemia (low red blood cell numbers), decreased numbers of white blood cells (which fight infection) loss of appetite, heartburn, and trouble sleeping. Side effects of nevirapine can be skin reactions or problems with the liver.*
- *You should **wait** until we have the results of the confirmatory test before you start breastfeeding*

**If the confirmatory test is negative**

- *Your baby will immediately be taken off any medication that was started*

**If the test is confirmed as positive**

- *Medication that was started to help prevent HIV transmission will be continued.*
- *If treatment is started, a doctor or nurse will discuss again any consequences of taking the medication*
- *Your baby will need more testing for HIV infection*
- *You will be referred to a physician for your ongoing medical care. You will also be referred to a health care provider who will take care of your baby’s medical needs*
- *HIV test results are **confidential**. The law protects people with HIV from discrimination.*

**Sample Consent Form**

I understand what was explained to me about the rapid HIV test.

I understand that antiretroviral medication may reduce the risk of HIV transmission to my baby and that this medication will be started if my preliminary HIV test results are positive.

I understand that a positive preliminary test will need to be confirmed.

I understand that refusing to be tested will not jeopardize my ongoing care or services.

I have been given written information about everything told to me.

- I consent to be tested for HIV infection using a rapid HIV test
- I understand that the test is not perfect and that it is a screening test
- If my preliminary HIV test is positive, I consent to have antiretroviral medication started during labor and continued for my baby after birth
- I decline to have rapid HIV testing at this time.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 (PRINT)

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Witness \_\_\_\_\_