

Follow up for babies born to mothers with HIV infection

About us

We are the paediatric team who will be following you and your new baby up, once they have been delivered.

What happens now?

If you are not already taking some medicines for your infection, you may be asked to start taking some shortly. This will help in lowering the amount of virus in your blood to be ready for your baby being born, which can help lower the risk of transmission.

Your midwife and doctor will also discuss a birth plan with you, there are a few possibilities for your plan which will depend on your viral load, and may have already been discussed with you. These are:

1. If your viral load is undetectable prior to the birth you may opt for a normal vaginal delivery. You will not receive any treatment during the delivery and your baby will have oral zidovudine (AZT) twice a day for 4 weeks after the delivery.
2. If you have a detectable viral load, you will be encouraged to have an elective caesarean section. During the delivery you will receive intravenous AZT, and your baby will be given 3 different oral medicines for the first 2 weeks, which is then reduced to 2 medicines for a further 2 weeks.
3. There are other scenarios which may need further discussions with your consultant and midwife.

The midwife will also discuss feeding options for your baby. It is best not to breast-feed your baby as this can be another way the virus can be passed on. You will be given advice on formula milks and given support with the costs if needed.

The doctors and nurses will let us know when you have delivered your baby, and we may come over to see you on the ward, to see if we can give you any support or answer any questions.

The doctors will take a blood test from your baby soon after they have been born, which will look for the virus in their blood (you may hear this being called a PCR and is a special sensitive test which looks for any sign of the virus in the blood). The

midwives on the ward will help you with techniques for giving the medicines to your baby and will ensure you are comfortable with this before you are discharged home.

What will happen once we leave hospital?

You will need to continue to give your baby his/her medicines every day, even if you think they don't like the taste. If you have any problems giving the medicines or worries about side effects then you can contact us, or ask your midwife, to talk about them.

We may call you or, arrange to come to see at home a week or so after the delivery to see how you are or have any questions or worries. We ask you to let us know if your GP is aware of your infection, so we know who we can and can't talk to about your baby. However we would strongly encourage you to tell your GP and health visitor, so that you and your baby can receive the best possible all-round care.

We will not talk to your GP or health visitor without your permission.

Your baby needs to have the medication for 4 weeks after which you can stop the medicine/s. We will send you an appointment to come to see the paediatrician when the baby is 6 to 8 weeks old so we can take another small blood test, to look for the virus again and to give them a general check-up.

At the next visit when your baby is 3 months old we will take one more blood test to check for the virus again.

In most cases the tests come back negative which means we will not need to see you again until your baby is about 18 months old, when we would ask you to return to clinic for one final blood test to look for any HIV antibody in your baby's blood. This test is to make sure any evidence of your infection has left the baby's blood. It does not mean we are still worried the baby might have HIV infection.

If at any time during this period you had any worries or wanted to see us, we would be happy to review you in our clinic.

Will the blood tests hurt my baby?

We will spray some 'cold spray' or use the magic cream on the area where we want to do the blood test, either your baby's hand or foot. This minimises the discomfort caused by the needle.

You will need to hold your baby tight to prevent them from struggling, whilst we do the test.

The spray works immediately, but the cream takes 20-30 minutes to work. The blood test itself shouldn't take long at all.

We will only take a small amount of blood, which will have no ill effects on your baby.

What if my baby is infected?

In the unlikely event that your baby has become infected with the virus, then we will be able to give you and your baby the best possible support and treatment we can offer. We have clinics for infected children where we can monitor their health and how the infection is progressing.

When the time comes that we feel your baby needs to start on some medicines to treat the infection we will talk to you about this. There are many medicines to treat the virus, which we would be able to discuss with you at the time, and support networks which you can be put in touch with.

It is important to remember that, with new modern treatment and good health care, children infected with HIV can go on to lead normal, healthy lives.

Any further questions?

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us on the telephone numbers at the beginning of this leaflet.

The team members are:

Paediatrician:

Paediatric nurse:

Contact details: