

# Testing your child for HIV if they may be at risk

## Paediatric Infectious Diseases

### Information for Patients

Last reviewed: February 2025

Next review: February 2028

Leaflet number: 200 Version: 2

## Introduction

Children with HIV can remain well with no health problems for years, until HIV weakens their immune system. After this, the child can become very vulnerable to dangerous illnesses. The only way to be sure this does not happen is for them to have a test.

## How do children get HIV?

If a mother is HIV positive she can pass this onto her child:

- during pregnancy
- at birth during delivery
- by breastfeeding

## Why should I test my child for HIV?

- The most dangerous thing for a HIV positive child (or adult) in the UK, is not knowing they have HIV.
- If you do not know your child's diagnosis and they do have HIV, they could become very ill.
- If your child's diagnosis is known, we can start treatment which is highly effective and will keep them well.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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## I do not want my child to know about my HIV infection. How can they be tested without finding out?

This is a concern for many parents:

- If the child is young, we simply need your permission. Talk to the support team.
- If the child is older and can give their own permission for blood tests, you can talk to the support team about what will be discussed with your child.

This can be difficult but the support team have been supporting parents for many years and can help you through it.

## Why is this really important? Can I wait until my child shows some signs of infection before testing?

- There have been a number of cases where children have become very ill, or died because they were not diagnosed with HIV in time.
- HIV testing of all children born to HIV positive parents, in particular mothers with HIV, can be a life saving action and should be done in every case.
- Even if they look healthy and feel healthy, however young they are, children should have a test to make absolutely sure that they are HIV negative.
- If parents do not allow children to be tested in a timely manner, we may involve the Child Safeguarding Team to work with parents.

## Contact details

Jarvis Clinic Health Advisor: 0116 258 5693 (with private voicemail)

Paediatric Specialist Nurse: 07921 545 470

## Useful further information

Children's HIV Association (CHIVA): [www.chiva.org.uk](http://www.chiva.org.uk)

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