

Infections in Pregnancy

Any kind of infection can cause a problem in pregnancy.

- Be aware of changes in your body that may be signs of infection.
- Let your doctor know if you have any of them.

Types of infection that you should watch for:

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

- Women get more UTIs than men do.
- The tube that drains a woman's bladder is shorter.
- The tube is short and straight. This makes it easier for germs to get into the bladder.
- A common germ, *E. coli*, causes most UTIs.
- Pregnant women tend to have more UTIs than women who are not pregnant.
- The baby presses on the bladder, and it does not empty out all the urine.
- When a bladder infection is not treated, it can cause a kidney infection.
 - A kidney infection can cause a problem with your baby's growth and lead to early delivery.
- Call your doctor if you notice any of the following signs:
 - Burning or pain while you urinate.
 - Urinating more often than usual.
 - Feeling like you need to urinate but can't.
 - Finding it hard to start urinating.
 - Cloudy or bloody urine.
 - Pain in the lower part of your stomach.
 - Pain in your back and/or you have a fever.
- A urine test can be done to see if you have an infection.
- If you have an infection, the test will show which medicine will work best for you.

Vaginal Infections

MONILIA OR YEAST INFECTION

Monilia is the most common form of vaginal infection.

- Women who are pregnant are more likely to get vaginal yeast infections.
- Pregnancy changes the vagina and makes it easier for bacteria to grow.

- If you have an infection and you deliver vaginally, the baby may become sick with thrush.
 - This is a fungal infection in the mouth.

Call your doctor if you notice any of the following:

- Vaginal itching and/or burning.
- Thick, white, cheesy discharge.
- Pain when you urinate.

Monilia, or yeast infection, is the most common form of vaginal infection.

BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS

- Bacterial vaginosis is another vaginal infection.
- Call your doctor if you notice any of the following:
 - Large amounts of thin, watery, yellow-gray discharge with a bad smell.

TRICHOMONIASIS

- Trichomoniasis is seen in women 16 to 35 years of age.
- Most infections are acquired through sexual activity.
- Call your doctor if you notice any of the following:
 - Yellow-green, frothy discharge with itching and a foul odor.
 - Inflamed vagina and cervix.
 - Pain when urinating
 - Pain during sex.
 - Both partners must be treated to get rid of this infection.

Do not ignore small problems; they may become bigger problems.

- Do not try to treat an infection yourself.
- Your doctor will provide you with advice and treatment for your condition.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD)

CHLAMYDIA

- Chlamydia infection is the most common STD.
 - It can infect the fallopian tubes, cervix, and urethra.
 - Pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, and tubal pregnancy may be caused by chlamydia.
 - If you have untreated chlamydia, your baby may get eye infections and pneumonia.
 - Premature birth and fetal death may be caused by chlamydia.

- Call your doctor if you notice any of the following:
 - Discharge that is thin or has pus in it.
 - Burning
 - Urinary frequency
 - Lower abdominal pain
- Sometimes there are no symptoms at all, and the infection is found after the woman's partner is treated.
- Your doctor will give you advice and discuss treatment for your specific condition.

HERPES

- Herpes infections are caused by a virus.
- There are 2 types of herpes:
 - Type 1 is the *cold sore* that is not sexually transmitted.
 - Type 2 is sexually transmitted and is found in the genital area.
 - If herpes is present in the genital tract of a woman during childbirth, it can have a devastating, even fatal effect on her newborn.
 - A cesarean section may be indicated when herpes is present at the time of delivery.
- The symptoms and treatment are the same for type 1 and type 2 herpes.
- Type 2 signs include:
 - Single or multiple blister-like bumps in the genital area and sometimes on the vaginal walls, cervix, urethra, and anus.
 - Blisters rupture, leaving painful, open lesions.
 - Inflammation, swelling, and pain may make it hard for you to urinate.
 - Flu-like symptoms.
 - Genital itching and tingling.
 - 1st time episodes usually last the longest and are the most severe.
 - 2 to 4 weeks from the 1st episode the raw areas heal and the virus goes away.
 - Some women never have a recurrence, while others have regular recurrences.
 - There is no known cure for herpes.
 - Talk to your doctor if you have signs of type 2 herpes.
 - Several antiviral medications can give you some relief from pain and prevent complications including secondary infections.
 - Talk to your doctor if you have these signs in the past.

SYPHILIS

- Syphilis is a chronic infection that can be passed to your baby while you are pregnant.
 - If syphilis is not treated, it can cause you to lose the baby during the 2nd trimester.
 - It can also cause your baby to be stillborn.
 - It can cause your baby to be born with a secondary stage infection.
- Your doctor will probably do a blood test at your 1st visit so that treatment can be started if you have this infection.

GONORRHEA

- Gonorrhea is a bacterial infection.
- Symptoms may include the following:
 - Greenish-yellow discharge
 - Pain when urinating
 - Urinary frequency
 - Inflammation and swelling of the genitals
- If you are infected at the time of delivery, it can cause your baby to be blind.
- Most infected women have no symptoms.
- Your doctor will do a test for this infection during your 1st visit.
- Treatment is an antibiotic that can be used during pregnancy.

HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV)

- HIV is the virus that causes the disease AIDS.
- HIV attacks the immune system that protects our bodies from germs.
- It is very possible for a person to be infected with HIV for years without knowing unless they are tested.
- HIV is often not diagnosed until it is so late that things like the common cold become life threatening.
- Early prenatal care, testing for HIV, and proper treatment for women diagnosed with HIV are extremely important.
- Early care will give you the best chance for having a safe pregnancy and delivering a healthy baby.

Good Health Habits

- Good health habits are very important for everyone.
- Here are some helpful tips to have good health habits:
 - After urinating, wipe from front to back to prevent germs from the rectal area spreading to your vaginal area.
 - Urinate every 4 to 5 hours. If you hold your urine too long, you can increase the risk of infection.
 - Empty your bladder before and after sex.
 - Wear cotton underwear, loose pants, and loose clothing.
 - Learn to notice the early signs of infection that were listed earlier.
- Call your doctor right away if you see any signs of infection or anything unusual.

Do not delay in calling your doctor. It is very important to treat infections early.

- When you do need to see your doctor about an infection:
 - Ask your doctor to explain your test results.
 - Ask your doctor to explain the treatment.
 - Ask your doctor how long it will take to heal.
 - Talk to your doctor about ways you can keep from getting the infection again.

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