

Protecting Your Child from Infections

PREGNANCY TIPS AND ARTICLES

ARTICLE

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Common infections like Chickenpox, Rubella, and Genital Herpes during pregnancy have multiple effects on mum and child. However, they can be addressed during early stages of pregnancy.

Chickenpox

- Chickenpox can cause problems for both mother and baby in pregnancy
- About 95 per cent of pregnant women are immune to it
- If you haven't had it, tell your doctor at your ante natal appointment
- If you aren't immune and think you may have come into contact with chickenpox, tell your doctor
- A blood test can show whether or not you are immune - you may have had chickenpox in the past and not know it
- Doctors can give you an anti-viral drug to prevent problems but you must take it within 10 days of being exposed

Rubella (German Measles)

- Rubella can cause serious problems for unborn children if caught in early pregnancy
- A blood test at your booking appointment will show whether you are immune or not
- If you are not immune and you suspect you may have been exposed, see your doctor
- A blood test can tell if you have been infected
- Doctors can also test to see if your child has been affected
- If your child is affected you will be offered counseling to help you decide what to do next

Group B streptococcus (GBS)

- Many women have this bacterium in their vagina and it usually causes no symptoms
- It can be passed to your child during labour
- In rare cases it can cause a serious infection in newborn children
- You will be given intravenous antibiotics to protect your child if:
 - your waters break early
 - you are in premature labour
 - you have a fever during labour
 - you are known to have GBS

Genital herpes

- If you get genital herpes for the first time in pregnancy (primary infection), tell your doctor
- A drug called acyclovir can help control the symptoms
- If you have a primary genital herpes infection near your due date, doctors will advise you to have a caesarean
- This will prevent the disease being transmitted to your child

Toxoplasmosis

- This parasite is found in cat feces and raw or undercooked meat
- It generally causes mild, flu-like symptoms
- It can harm your child if you catch it during pregnancy
- Most of us are immune to it
- To avoid catching toxoplasmosis in pregnancy:
 - avoid emptying cat litter trays or use disposable rubber gloves
 - wear gloves when gardening in case the soil contains feces
 - only eat well-cooked meat
- If you think you may have been infected, talk to your doctor
- They will organize a blood test to check
- Antibiotics can reduce any harm to your child

Parvovirus (slapped cheek disease)

- In rare cases, this normally mild childhood disease can cause problems for your unborn child
- Symptoms include a red rash on the cheeks, hence the name
- If you think you may have been exposed see your doctor
- A blood test can tell if you are immune or not

- Even if you have been exposed, your child will usually be fine

HIV

- The HIV virus can be transmitted to your child during labour and also via breast milk
- You will be offered a confidential test for the virus in early pregnancy
- If you are found to have it, doctors can take steps to keep you in good health and reduce the risk of transmission to your child

