

HIV/AIDS and pregnancy

Who we are

Bankmed Medical Scheme (referred to as 'the Scheme'), registration number 1279, is a non-profit organisation, registered with the Council for Medical Schemes. Discovery Health (Pty) Ltd (referred to as 'the administrator') is a separate company and an authorised financial services provider (registration number 1997/013480/07) which takes care of the administration of Bankmed Medical Scheme.

HIV and AIDS in pregnant women

It is every woman's right to choose whether she wants to have a baby or not. Being HIV-positive does not mean that you cannot have a baby. It does mean that you have to think seriously about the risks involved and know there are choices you need to make when you're pregnant and HIV-positive.

An HIV-positive woman could pass the virus on to her baby during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding.

HIV- positive pregnant woman

If nothing is done, 15% to 45% of babies born to HIV-positive mothers will contract HIV. HIV medication helps prevent mother-to-child transmission (passing HIV on to your baby during pregnancy). It is therefore important to know one's HIV status early on in pregnancy, so the right treatment starts early on.

Speak to your Healthcare Professional regarding your choices

Discussing your pregnancy and your HIV-positive status with your Healthcare Professional or counsellor will help you to understand the risks involved to both you and your unborn baby. You need to do this as soon as possible so that you can make a decision about the choices available to you in good time.



Taking HIV medication in your pregnancy

Your Healthcare Professional may have discussed taking HIV medication (antiretroviral therapy) during your pregnancy to reduce the risk of passing HIV on to your baby. This will depend on what stage of HIV you are in, based on your CD4 count (white blood cell count).

All HIV- positive pregnant women should have treatment after the first trimester of pregnancy to reduce the risk of passing HIV on to their baby

Should your CD4 count be 500 or less



You will need to take treatment for the rest of your life to keep you and your baby healthy

Should your CD4 count be higher than 500



You will need to take treatment while pregnant and breastfeeding

Speak to your Healthcare Professional about all the possible side effects for you and your baby from using HIV medication during your pregnancy.

Take good care of yourself during your pregnancy

- Carry on using condoms when having sex while you are pregnant. This will prevent you from being re-infected with HIV or sexually transmitted infections
- Should you or your partner have a sexually transmitted infection, it is important to seek treatment for it
- Go for regular pregnancy check-ups so your Healthcare Professional can monitor your CD4 count and viral load
- Should you become sick, go to your healthcare professional as soon as possible.

HIV and childbirth

It is important to speak to your doctor about the type of delivery you are having. Try not to give birth to your baby at home.

It is recommended that you give birth in a hospital. In a hospital, your healthcare professional can better manage any problems that may occur and will ensure that your baby receives his or her HIV medication after birth.

Your baby will also receive antiretroviral therapy to prevent mother-to-child transmission after birth. This treatment lasts for about six weeks or for as long as you breastfeed.



Breastfeeding while HIV positive

HIV can be passed through a mother's breast milk to the baby if the mother is HIV positive. Deciding whether or not to breastfeed your baby is a decision you should take together with your healthcare professional or counsellor. There are many things to consider, such as the side effects of taking HIV medication. Your healthcare professional can speak to you about the best way and for how long, to breastfeed your baby. They will also talk to you about taking medication while you are breastfeeding to prevent passing on HIV to your baby.

Monitor your baby regularly

You should check if your baby is HIV-positive when he or she is six weeks old. This test is called the PCR test. This test can be repeated again when your baby is six months old. When this test is done, it will depend on whether you are breastfeeding your baby or not.

Should the PCR test be negative at six weeks, a follow up HIV Elisa at roughly 18 months of age must be done.

Should the test be positive then, the child must receive ARV treatment.

You should speak to your healthcare professional should you be worried about your baby's health or if there are any problems and they will advise you on the steps to take.

For more information on HIV and AIDS or about Bankmed's HIV/AIDS Programme, contact 0900 226 (0800 BANKMED). All calls are treated with complete confidentiality.

Disclaimer

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Complaints process

You may lodge a complaint or query with Bankmed Medical Scheme directly on 0800 BANKMED (0800 226 5633) or address a complaint in writing directly to the Principal Officer. Should your complaint remain unresolved, you may lodge a formal dispute by following Bankmed Medical Scheme's internal disputes process.

Members, who wish to approach the Council for Medical Schemes for assistance, may do so in writing to: Council for Medical Schemes Complaints Unit, Block A, Eco Glades 2 Office Park, 420 Witch-Hazel Avenue, Eco Park, Centurion, 0157 or via e-mail at complaints@medicalschemes.com. Customer Care Centre: 0861 123 267/website www.medicalschemes.com.

