

Infection: Recognition and prevention

Some infections may cause miscarriage, preterm delivery, harm to your baby, and/or birth defects. Many women do not know they have an infection.

What infections may affect me and my baby?

- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) pose risks to pregnant women and their babies.
- About one in four American women are infected with herpes, but most are unaware because they have no symptoms.
- Other common infections are bacterial vaginosis and urinary tract infections (UTIs).

What are some infection symptoms?

- Symptoms of a UTI include pain or burning when urinating or a feeling of urgency or need to urinate.
- Other infections may have symptoms that include vaginal itching or burning, discharge with an unpleasant odor, painful sex or abdominal discomfort. Not all infections have symptoms so testing is important.

What can I do to prevent vaginal infection?

- Get screened early and again late in pregnancy. Sex partners should be evaluated, tested and treated.
- If you or your partner were treated, have a repeat “test for cure” done.
- Protect yourself by using condoms.
- Do not douche.
- To reduce your risk of urinary tract infections and kidney infections, drink eight glasses of water a day, urinate before and after sex, and do not use feminine sprays or powders.

What other infections may be harmful to my baby?

- Toxoplasmosis is an infection caused by eating undercooked meat. Cook meat well until there is no pink, and wash hands before and after preparation. Toxoplasmosis can also be caused by contact with cat feces. Have someone else clean the litter box.
- Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is a virus common in daycare centers. To avoid infection, wash hands with soap after contact with a child’s saliva or handling toys. Wear gloves when changing diapers or wash hands well with soap.

For more information

March of Dimes

www.marchofdimes.com

American Pregnancy Association

www.americanpregnancy.org/pregnancycomplications/

Public Health Division

<https://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/>

<https://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyPeopleFamilies/ReproductiveSexualHealth>

Oregon 211info

Call 211 or 1-800-723-3638 for referral and information on getting tested

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancy_gateway/infections.html