Consensus Statement: HIV Screening in Pregnancy

The New Zealand College of Midwives supports discussion between midwives and women on HIV screening in pregnancy. The pregnant woman determines her risk factors following this discussion and decides whether to undertake HIV screening based on full and culturally appropriate information.

**Rationale:**
- Early diagnosis and treatment of HIV gives women the best opportunity to stay healthy and well longer \(^3\).
- Evidence supports antenatal treatment and appropriate intervention for HIV positive women as effective in significantly reducing the rate of perinatal transmission to babies \(^3, 4, 5, 10, 13\).
- The midwife-woman partnership can facilitate a safe environment in which the woman can discuss information about her health status so that she can make an informed decision about screening for HIV \(^8\).
- Midwives have a responsibility to inform all their clients about the risk factors for HIV transmission, that a test is available; the implications of being HIV positive and pregnant and of agencies where women can obtain further information about HIV screening if they require it \(^1, 8\).

**Guidelines/Recommendations:**
Midwives are responsible for ensuring that information given to women is accurate and up to date and that they themselves have the skills and education to provide evidence informed pre and post-test advice. It is the midwife's responsibility to ensure the woman receives the results of any test the midwife requests and to involve other agencies to support the woman if the result is indeterminate or positive \(^1, 3, 8\).

Advice given by midwives should be holistic and include information on:
- Risk behavior for HIV infection
- How screening is undertaken
- Other services the woman can be referred to if she wishes to discuss options about HIV screening further
- Window period – with newer testing methods, this is approximately two weeks
- Implications and treatment options for both the woman and her baby if screening is positive including interventions to reduce transmission rates \(^3\).

Specific consent or refusal for HIV screening must always be obtained and the woman’s decision documented in the midwifery records \(^3, 7\).

Confidentiality, record keeping - it is important to ensure women are aware their data is used for monitoring and evaluation by the MOH and that their personal details are carefully protected \(^3\).

If a woman chooses to be screened for HIV the midwife will:
- endeavor to give the results face to face \(^3, 7, 11\).
- provide post-test advice for all women, regardless of the result \(^3, 7, 11\).
- be aware of the services available to refer women to if necessary \(^3, 7\).
References:


Resources:


National Screening Unit: Antenatal HIV screening resources. https://www.nsu.govt.nz/health-professionals/hiv-testing-pregnancy/antenatal-hiv-screening-resources

The purpose of New Zealand College of Midwives Consensus Statements is to provide women, midwives and the maternity services with the profession’s position on any given situation. The guidelines are designed to educate and support best practice. All position statements are regularly reviewed and updated in line with evidence-based practice.