SYPHILIS TESTING & TREATMENT IN PREGNANCY

AMERICAN COLLEGE of NURSE-MIDWIVES

Syphilis is a bacterial infection that can be easily cured with antibiotics.
Rates of syphilis are rising in the U.S. and most people don't have symptoms.
Testing is recommended because up to 40% of babies born to someone with untreated syphilis will die from the infection.

RISKS OF SYPHILIS IN PREGNANCY

- It can cause serious health problems that affect the heart, brain, and nervous system.
- It can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth, low birthweight, serious health problems for the baby such as bone, brain, or organ damage, and infant death.

HOW SYPHILIS SPREADS

- Syphilis (SIFF-uh-liss) spreads through skin to skin contact with a syphilis sore or rash or through vaginal, oral, or anal sex.
- There are four stages of syphilis and it can spread most easily in the first two stages.
- A baby can get syphilis during pregnancy or birth.

TESTING FOR SYPHILIS

- Most people who have syphilis don't notice any symptoms and don't know they have it until they are tested.
- The test for syphilis is a blood test. This is done 1-3 times during pregnancy as part of routine blood draws. The first one is usually done at your first visit.
- Testing is confidential and covered by health insurance.
- If the result is positive, a second test will be done to confirm the result.
- The health department will be notified of a positive test result. This is confidential and helps track syphilis and make sure people get treatment.

CURING SYPHILIS

- Syphilis can be safely cured during pregnancy with an antibiotic called penicillin.
- Treatment in the first and second trimester provides the most protection for your baby.

TESTING EARLY IN PREGNANCY IS RECOMMENDED BECAUSE WHEN SYPHILIS IS CURED WITH ANTIBIOTICS BEFORE 30 WEEKS IT GREATLY REDUCES THE CHANCE THAT A BABY WILL GET SYPHILIS.

TELL YOUR MIDWIFE

if you tested positive for syphilis and received treatment in the past. This helps you get the right type of test. Most people who had syphilis in the past will continue to test positive for life because the body keeps some antibodies from the past infection even after they are fully cured.