

Promoting sexual health and wellbeing: the vital role of the midwife



The risk of acquiring HIV, hepatitis B and syphilis does not end with a negative antenatal screening result

56.4% of babies born with congenital syphilis between 2015 and 2021 were born to women with a negative antenatal screening result, meaning they acquired syphilis during pregnancy after screening

62.3% of children with vertically (mother-to-child) acquired HIV between 2006 and 2021 were born to women diagnosed with HIV after pregnancy. The vast majority of women had a negative screening result in pregnancy, meaning they acquired HIV during the pregnancy or while breastfeeding



How midwives can promote sexual health awareness in pregnancy

- Discuss sexual health at booking and what to do if a risk occurs
- Use the 'Negative Now' message when giving negative screening results to explain results are negative at the point of testing and do not confer protection throughout pregnancy
- Be aware of the risk factors, that where disclosed, indicate the need to offer retesting and referral for sexual health screening

Risk factors

- a change of sexual partner
- one or both partner(s) are sexually active with other people
- a partner is diagnosed with an STI
- injecting recreational drug use
- Involvement in sex work