FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 1992

Testing HIV positive doesn’t deter women from getting pregnant

By MALCOLM RITTE

Pregnant inner-city women in

New York who learned they were infected with the Aida virus were not deterred from getting pregnant again and giving birth, despite the risk of infecting their babies, a study found.

The result suggests that just tested pregnant women for Aids virus infection, as recommended by some health authorities, may not substantially reduce the number of infected babies born, the researchers said.

To reach that goal, women must be provided with adequate birth control, their sexual partners must be involved in efforts to prevent further births, and

“women must be helped to find self-fulfillment in areas other than childbearing,” the researchers wrote.

The study also emphasizes the importance of finding ways to prevent mother-to-baby transmission, said co-author Dr Howard Minkoff. It also supports maintaining access to abortion

services, he said.

He and colleagues at the state university of New York Health

Science centre in Brooklyn present the study in the June issue of the Journal Obstetrics and Gynecology.

The finding makes sense, said

Vickie Maya, a psychologist at the University of California, Los

Angeles, who studies Aids-related’ behaviour in women and ethnic minorities.

“When you tell someone there is 20-tu-50 per cent chance of their child being (infected) with the virus, that’s riot horrendous if you think about it,” Maya said.

“Given what the meaning of pregnancy could be, you might decide to take that risk.”

A new child may mean more intimacy with a sexual partner or even marriage, or an impetus for leading a better life, she said. In the inner city, a child also may be seen as a chance to raise the family’s status if the baby grows up to be successful, and a source of support for the mother in her later years, Mays said. -

In addition, many births from infected women in the study probably were not planned, she said. In poorer households, lack of privacy and mismatched working shifts can make it harder to plan sex, and therefore to practice contraception, she said.

Sexual partners may also object to contraceptives like condoms, she said.

The study involved 206 pregnant mostly minority women of low socioeconomic status. They were drawn from an area of

Brooklyn with a high rate of infection with the aids virus (HIV),

Minkoff said. The women, all enrolled in prenatal care programmes were offered HIV testing and counselling.

Testing found that 98 women ere HIV positive and 108 were uninfected.