

What happens if the results of the test show a birth defect?

Most often, the baby will not have the condition for which the test was done. In those few cases where a test does show a birth defect, you will be given information about how it will affect the baby.

You can then decide whether you want to continue the pregnancy or not. Your doctor, midwife or genetic counsellor will give you information and support while you are making this decision and afterwards.

How can I find out more about prenatal testing?

The ideal time to learn about prenatal testing is before a planned pregnancy. In some cases, tests need to be done before a pregnancy to check whether the parents are 'carriers' of a condition which may affect their baby.

For information about services in your area (including the ACT), contact the Centre for Genetics Education
Tel. (02) 9926 7324

Written in association with the Centre for Genetics Education and
NSW Department of Health

For further copies please contact:
Better Health Centre – Publications Warehouse
Locked Mail Bag 5003 Gladesville NSW 2111
Tel. (02) 9816 0452 Fax. (02) 9816 0492



Further information can be obtained from the following centres. They specialise in prenatal testing and related counselling.

Camperdown	King George V Hospital Dept of Ultrasound and Fetal Medicine Tel: (02) 9515 6042
Kogarah	St George Hospital Women's and Children's Health Tel: (02) 9113 3635
Liverpool	Liverpool Hospital Fetal Medicine Unit Tel: (02) 9828 5631
Newcastle	John Hunter Hospital Maternal and Fetal Medicine Unit Tel: (02) 4921 4694
Penrith	Nepean Hospital Perinatal Ultrasound Tel: (02) 4734 2578
Randwick	Royal Hospital for Women Centre for Fetal Medicine Tel: (02) 9382 6098
St Leonards	Royal North Shore Hospital Maternal Fetal Medicine Unit Tel: (02) 9926 7099
Westmead	Westmead Hospital Fetal Medicine Unit Tel: (02) 9845 6802
Canberra	The Canberra Hospital Clinical Genetics Dept Tel: (02) 6244 2133



Tests to check
your baby's health
before birth





Every couple wants to have a healthy baby. For most couples, that will come true. However, there are some couples who have a greater chance than others of having a baby with a birth defect.

Special tests are available which are carried out during pregnancy to determine if the baby has a particular problem. These tests are generally referred to as prenatal diagnosis or testing.

Some reasons why you might consider having prenatal testing

- You have already had a child with a serious condition.
- You or your baby's father have a serious condition which may be passed on to your baby.
- You have a relative with a serious condition or an affected child.
- You have a family history of a condition which only affects boys. Women in the family may be 'carriers', as with haemophilia.
- You are having a baby and you are in your mid-30s or older (not necessarily your first pregnancy).

Can all birth defects be detected by prenatal testing?

No. Prenatal testing is highly accurate, a normal test result cannot show up every possible problem with the baby.

How is prenatal testing done?

There is an increasing number of tests available to detect birth defects. Ask your doctor, midwife or a genetic counsellor.

Ultrasound

The ultrasound scan is a picture of the baby in the uterus (womb). The doctor rubs a jelly-like substance on the mother's abdomen before pressing an instrument like a microphone against her skin. Sound waves pass through this instrument into the uterus, through the amniotic fluid and bounce harmlessly off the baby. A computer changes these sound waves into a picture on a television screen so that the outline of the baby is clearly seen.

The ultrasound scan tells your doctor the age of the pregnancy and if you are carrying more than one baby. It can also be used to detect certain problems with the baby. This test is harmless to the mother and the baby.

Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS)

This is done between the 11th to 13th week of pregnancy. Thus, it is important to see your doctor as soon as you realise you are pregnant.

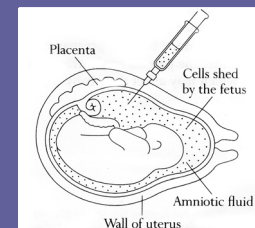
The test is done by looking at cells taken from the placenta. No anaesthetic is required, and a test result is usually available in two to three weeks.

When the test is carried out by an obstetrician experienced in the techniques, the risk of miscarriage related to the test is about 1 per cent (1 in 100 pregnancies).

Amniocentesis

This test is done between the 15th to 18th week of pregnancy. A small amount of the amniotic fluid is taken from the uterus and then sent to a laboratory to be studied.

No anaesthetic is required, and a result is usually obtained in about three to four weeks. When the test is carried out by an obstetrician experienced in the technique, the risk of a miscarriage related to the test is about 1 per cent (1 in 100 pregnancies).



Small amount of amniotic fluid is taken for testing