Prenatal Testing

Deciding whether or not to have testing during your pregnancy or which test is right for you can be confusing. There are several things you can do to make the best decision for your pregnancy.

- **Be informed.** Talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner about your testing options. Read about the tests that are available. Ask questions.
- **Consider your values.** Think about whether or not information from prenatal testing would be helpful to you.
- **Weigh the pros and cons.** What are reasons to choose testing? What are reasons not to choose testing? What are the risks of the test?

The following decision tree can help you decide which test, if any, is right for you.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Would knowing that my baby has a birth defect help me prepare for having a baby with special needs? Would I consider ending my pregnancy if the baby had a birth defect?

If you answered **NO** to *both* questions, you may decide not to have any testing for birth defects

If you answered **YES** to *either* question, you may want to consider some type of prenatal testing

Do I want to know whether my pregnancy is at higher risk for certain birth defects?

Am I willing to accept a test that might miss these birth defects?

If you answered **YES** to these questions you may want to consider having a SCREENING TEST.

Integrated Screening:

- Testing begins about 11-12 weeks with the Nuchal Translucency (NT) ultrasound and a blood test
- Then an afp (alpha-fetoprotein) blood test is drawn at 16 weeks
- Preliminary results are available in the first trimester (the NT test)
- The final result is a combination of these two separate blood tests and the Nuchal translucency ultrasound
- CVS or Amniocentesis can be done if any result come back positive (abnormal)
- Detects 90% of babies with Down syndrome
- New test: Materni T21 Plus – can detect 99% of Trisomy 13, 18 and 21 after 10 wks.

Do I want to know for certain if my baby has a chromosome (or other) abnormality?

Am I willing to accept a test that has a small risk for miscarriage?

If you answered **YES** to these questions you may want to consider having a DIAGNOSTIC TEST.

Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS):

- Done between 10 to 13+ weeks
- Less than 1/100 risk for miscarriage
- Detects > 99% of chromosomal abnormalities
- Does NOT test for neural tube defects (spina bifida)
- Follow-up testing may still be needed

Amniocentesis

- Done about 16-18 weeks gestation
- Less than 1/300 risk for miscarriage
- Detects > 99% of chromosomal abnormalities
- Also includes test for neural tube defects (spina bifida)
- Follow-up testing rarely needed