

Common Tests During Pregnancy

This handout lists and briefly explains many of the tests you may have done during your pregnancy.

All women have some tests during pregnancy. Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about the tests or your test results.

If a test result is abnormal, we will call you right away. If it is normal, we will review it at your next visit.



An ultrasound uses sound waves to create images of your baby. See page 29.

Early- and Mid-Pregnancy Tests

Test	What Is Tested	Information	Comments
Blood type and Rh factor	Blood	A woman with Rh-negative blood type and an Rh-positive partner may develop antibodies that could harm the baby. This is checked during pregnancy and labor.	If mother is Rh-negative, she is given a Rhogam shot at 28 weeks. If the baby is Rh-positive, she may be given a 2nd shot after birth.
CBC <i>(complete blood count)</i>	Blood	Checks levels of certain cells in the mother's blood.	
Chlamydia <i>(sexually transmitted)</i>	Swab from cervix or urine sample	Common bacterial infection. Mother may pass it to her baby at birth.	Many women have no symptoms. Treated with antibiotics.

Gonorrhea <i>(sexually transmitted)</i>	Swab from cervix or urine sample	Bacterial infection. Mother may pass it to her baby at birth.	Many women have no symptoms. Treated with antibiotics.
Group B strep (Beta strep)	Vaginal and rectal cultures. Results are checked before labor.	May infect amniotic fluid (bag of waters). Mother may pass it to her baby at birth.	Many women have no symptoms. Treated with antibiotics in labor. If bacteria are found in the vagina or urine, or mother has risk factors such as preterm labor (PTL) or rupture of membrane (ROM), she is treated with antibiotics. Baby may need to be watched for the first 1 to 2 days.
Hematocrit	Blood	Checks for low red blood cell count (<i>anemia</i>). Also done after birth if there is blood loss during delivery.	May need iron supplements.
Hepatitis B <i>(sexually transmitted)</i>	Blood	Infection of liver. Mother may pass hepatitis B to her baby if infection is active.	We recommend all babies receive the first of 3 vaccinations on day of discharge.
Herpes simplex virus (oral and genital types) <i>(sexually transmitted)</i>	Blood	Some risk of passing it to the baby, especially when first infected. Woman may need treatment.	1 in 3 women have genital herpes. Test can show past exposure, even when there are no symptoms.
HIV (Human immunodeficiency virus) <i>(sexually transmitted)</i>	Blood	May not have symptoms. Mother may pass it to her baby at birth. Can progress to AIDS.	Mother can be treated to help prevent passing infection to the baby.
Pap smear	Swab from cervix	Screens for pre-cancerous or cancerous conditions.	Follow-up exams or treatment (or both) after pregnancy.

Rubella (German measles)	Blood	Mother may pass the infection to the baby, which can cause birth defects.	If test result is negative, mother is given vaccine after the birth. If mother is immune, there is no risk to the baby.
Syphilis (sexually transmitted)	Blood	May cause stillbirth or birth defects and illnesses.	Treated with antibiotics.
Ultrasound	Sound waves show image of baby in uterus	Helps confirm due date and checks baby's position and growth. Confirms normal anatomy.	Anatomy is best seen after 18 weeks.
Urinalysis/ Urine Culture	Urine	Checks for bladder infection or kidney disease. These may be linked with preterm birth or kidney infection if not treated.	Treated with antibiotics.

Late-Pregnancy Tests

Test	What Is Tested	Information	Comments
Group B strep (Beta strep)	Vaginal and rectal cultures; results are checked before labor	May infect amniotic fluid (bag of waters). Mother may pass infection to her baby at birth.	Many women have no symptoms. Treated with antibiotics in labor. If bacteria are found in the vagina or urine, or mother has risk factors (such as preterm labor or rupture of membrane), she is treated with antibiotics. Baby may need to be watched for the first 1 to 2 days.



This woman is having a non-stress test to check her baby's well-being.

Glucola	Blood (after drinking special sugary drink)	Screening test for diabetes in pregnancy (<i>gestational diabetes</i>).	Done at weeks 26 to 28, or sooner if medically indicated. If blood sugar is high, mother will have a 3-hour glucose tolerance test.
Non-stress test (NST)	External electronic fetal monitor used	Baby's heart rate recorded for 20 to 30 minutes to check changes in response to baby's movement or contractions.	Often done to assess your baby's well-being.

After-Pregnancy Tests

Test	What Is Tested	Information	Comments
Pap smear	Swab from cervix	Screens for pre-cancerous or cancerous conditions.	Done at 6-week postpartum checkup, if needed.
2-hour glucose tolerance test	Blood, before and after drinking special sugary drink	Screens for diabetes, if had gestational diabetes in pregnancy.	Done at 6-week postpartum visit.
Breast self-exam	You check your breast tissue for lumps or changes	You may feel lumps or see changes that could be pre-cancerous or cancerous and may need more testing.	Do self-exam every month after your period, or on the last day of the month if you are not menstruating. Report any lumps or changes to your care provider.

Questions?

Your questions are important. If you have questions about tests during pregnancy, call your healthcare provider during office hours.