

Routine Tests in Pregnancy



Why so many tests in pregnancy?

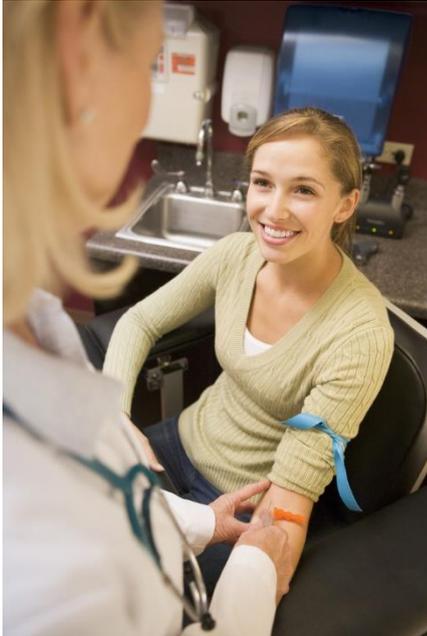
Pregnancy is usually a time of great joy, but it is also a time when there is a lot going on with your body. To add to the complexity, there is a baby to consider too. So an effort is made to make sure that all is going well during the pregnancy, and that you and the baby are as healthy as possible.

Tests in early pregnancy

Tests are performed to establish the mother's blood group and whether she has antibodies that could affect the baby. A full blood count is undertaken to test for anaemia and other problems, with blood clotting for example. Immunity to Rubella (German measles) is performed, along with tests for a range of viral and other infections.

Screening tests for the baby

In a small proportion of pregnancies, the baby can be affected by a condition such as Down syndrome (where the baby's cells have three copies of Chromosome 21 rather than two) as well as other conditions of the chromosomes. The chance of this occurring varies and should be discussed with your doctor. Two types of tests are available. The first is a 'combined first trimester screen' involving a blood test (done from ten weeks) and an ultrasound performed between 12 and 14 weeks. The second is a blood test that uses free DNA in the mother's bloodstream. Discuss whether you wish to have screening, and if so what you wish for, with your doctor.



Ultrasound

Ultrasound is very commonly used during pregnancy. It is completely safe and provides a large amount of information about the pregnancy. Ultrasound will be used to confirm the due date and establish the number of babies in early pregnancy. It might be used as part of a screen for genetic conditions at the end of the first trimester.

At about 20 weeks a very detailed ultrasound is performed to establish whether the baby has any changes of concern, and to determine the position of the placenta. Further ultrasounds might be performed, depending on the course of the pregnancy.



Glucose tolerance test

A special form of diabetes – gestational diabetes – can occur in pregnancy. This happens as a result of hormones produced by the placenta and their effect on the body's handling of glucose. Gestational diabetes can affect the health of the baby, but has no symptoms for the mother. For this reason, a specific test is required and this is performed at the start of the third trimester: a 'glucose tolerance test.'

A swab for group B Streptococcus

Group B streptococcus (GBS)