



Home → Health Topics → Prenatal Testing

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/prenataltesting.html>

Prenatal Testing

What is prenatal testing?

Prenatal testing provides information about the health of your fetus [<https://medlineplus.gov/fetalhealthanddevelopment.html>] before the baby is born [<https://medlineplus.gov/childbirth.html>]. Some routine tests during pregnancy [<https://medlineplus.gov/pregnancy.html>] also check your health [<https://medlineplus.gov/healthproblemsinpregnancy.html>]. The prenatal test may use a sample of your blood, urine or fluid from your vagina, cervix, or rectum.

Since some health conditions can be treated before your baby is born, it's important to find them early. But even if they cannot be treated, it can still be helpful to know about the problem early on. This gives you time to **learn about the condition** [<https://medlineplus.gov/birthdefects.html>] and prepare for any challenges you may face after the baby is born.

What is prenatal testing used to diagnose?

At your first prenatal visit [<https://medlineplus.gov/prenatalcare.html>], your health care provider will test for various conditions, including problems with your blood, signs of infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/infectionsandpregnancy.html>], and whether you are immune to rubella [<https://medlineplus.gov/rubella.html>] (German measles) and chickenpox [<https://medlineplus.gov/chickenpox.html>].

Throughout your pregnancy, your provider may recommend additional tests as well. Some tests are suggested for all women, such as screenings for gestational diabetes [<https://medlineplus.gov/diabetesandpregnancy.html>], Down syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/downsyndrome.html>], and HIV [<https://medlineplus.gov/hivandpregnancy.html>].

Your provider might offer other tests based on your:

- Age
- Personal or family medical history
- Ethnic background
- Results of routine tests

What are the two types of prenatal tests?

There are two types of tests:

- **Screening tests** check if you or your fetus may have certain health issues. They look at risk but do not diagnose problems. If your screening test result is abnormal, it does not mean that there is a problem. It means that more information is needed. Your provider can explain what the test results mean and possible next steps. You may need diagnostic testing.
- **Diagnostic tests** help determine whether you or your fetus have a certain health problem.

It is your choice whether to get prenatal tests. You and your provider can talk about the risks and benefits of the tests, as well as the type of information they can give you. Then you can decide which ones are right for you.

Start Here

- Prenatal Genetic Screening Tests [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/prenatal-genetic-screening-tests>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- Prenatal Panel [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/prenatal-panel/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-prenatales/>]
- Prenatal Tests: FAQs [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/prenatal-tests.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/prenatal-tests.html>]
- What Tests Might I Need during Pregnancy? [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/preconceptioncare/conditioninfo/tests-needed>]  (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/preconceptioncare/informacion/necesar>]

Specifics

- Alpha-Fetoprotein (AFP) Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/alpha-fetoprotein-afp-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-afp-alfafetoproteina/>]
- Amniocentesis (amniotic fluid test) [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/amniocentesis-amniotic-fluid-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/amniocentesis-analisis-del-liquido-amniotico/>]
- Blood Glucose Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/blood-glucose-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-glucosa-en-la-sangre/>]
- Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS) [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/chorionic-villus-sampling-cvs/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/muestra-de-vellosidades-corionicas/>]
- Cystic Fibrosis: Prenatal Screening and Diagnosis [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/cystic-fibrosis-prenatal-screening-and-diagnosis>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- Down Syndrome Tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/down-syndrome-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-sindrome-de-down/>]
- Glucose in Urine Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/glucose-in-urine-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-glucosa-en-la-orina/>]
- Karyotype Genetic Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/karyotype-genetic-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-cariotipo/>]
- Nonstress Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/nonstress-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-sin-estres/>]
- Obstetric Ultrasound [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/obstetricus>]
(American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/obstetricus>]
- Prenatal Cell-Free DNA Screening [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/prenatal-cell-free-dna-screening/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-adn-fetal-libre/>]
- Red Blood Cell Antibody Screen [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/red-blood-cell-antibody-screen/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-anticuerpos-contra-los-globulos-rojos/>]
- Rh Factor Blood Test [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/rh-factor/about/pac-20394960?p=1>]
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/tests-procedures/rh-factor/about/pac-20394960?p=1>]
- Strep B Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/strep-b-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-estreptococos-del-grupo-b/>]

Images

- Amniocentesis - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100192_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100192_1.htm]
- Chorionic villus sampling - series -- Normal anatomy [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100194_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100194_1.htm]
- Percutaneous umbilical cord blood sampling - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100196_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100196_1.htm]
- Prenatal ultrasound - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100197_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100197_1.htm]

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Amniocentesis [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?intr=amniocentesis&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Chorionic Villi Sampling [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?intr=chorionic+villi+sampling&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Prenatal Ultrasound [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?intr=ultrasound&term=prenatal&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Comparison of the current characteristics and management of congenital biliary dilatation... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40694124>]
- Article: Views and attitudes about the offer of NIPT: a qualitative study... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40684204>]
- Article: Prenatal diagnosis and genetic assessment of fetuses with single umbilical artery... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40684108>]
- Prenatal Testing -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Prenatal+Diagnosis%22%5Bmajr%3Aneop%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bdat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/>]
- March of Dimes Foundation [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://nacersano.marchofdimes.org/>]

Patient Handouts

- Alpha fetoprotein [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003573.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003573.htm>]
- Amniocentesis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003921.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003921.htm>]
- Chorionic villus sampling [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003406.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003406.htm>]
- Monitoring your baby before labor [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000485.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000485.htm>]

- Nuchal translucency test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007561.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007561.htm>]
- Quadruple screen test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007311.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007311.htm>]
- Ultrasound pregnancy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003778.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003778.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

- Alpha fetoprotein [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003573.htm>]
- Amniocentesis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003921.htm>]
- Amniocentesis - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100192_1.htm]
- Chorionic villus sampling [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003406.htm>]
- Chorionic villus sampling - series -- Normal anatomy [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100194_1.htm]
- Fetal echocardiography [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007340.htm>]
- Fetal-maternal erythrocyte distribution blood test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003407.htm>]
- Monitoring your baby before labor [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000485.htm>]
- Nuchal translucency test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007561.htm>]
- Percutaneous umbilical cord blood sampling - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100196_1.htm]
- Prenatal ultrasound - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100197_1.htm]
- Quadruple screen test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007311.htm>]
- Ultrasound pregnancy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003778.htm>]

Related Health Topics

- Fetal Health and Development [<https://medlineplus.gov/fetalhealthanddevelopment.html>]
- Genetic Testing [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetictesting.html>]
- Prenatal Care [<https://medlineplus.gov/prenatalcare.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Prenatal Testing* is the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/prenataltesting.html>] on *Prenatal Testing*

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies.

MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our **disclaimer**

[<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our **quality guidelines**

[<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>] .

The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)

National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health

Last updated June 18, 2025