

Medical Tests

A healthcare provider will need to do some tests when you are pregnant. These tests check the health of you and your baby. They are safe for both of you.

Why will your healthcare provider do blood tests?

Healthcare providers do blood tests during pregnancy to check on your health and the health of your baby. Your first blood tests during pregnancy will be done in your first trimester.

Your healthcare providers may also order additional blood tests at any time during pregnancy. They will want to make sure you are protected from certain diseases. If you are not protected, you may need to get a vaccination. They will also want to check for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. These need to be treated for your health and to protect your baby.

During pregnancy, don't forget to see your healthcare providers for ongoing concerns, like chronic illnesses.

What type of tests will be done?

Tests in the first three months of pregnancy include a pregnancy test, a physical exam, blood tests, and a urine test. The first blood tests during pregnancy are called prenatal screening tests.

Each time you see a healthcare provider, your blood pressure and your weight will be checked. It is important to be weighed because gaining too much or too little weight can affect your baby's health.

Some medical tests, like some X-rays, are not safe during pregnancy. Always tell healthcare providers that you are pregnant.

What will be included in your physical exam?

A pelvic exam may be done. During a pelvic exam, your healthcare provider will examine your vagina, uterus, and ovaries. This is to check for potential complications that may impact the development of the baby or affect labour and birth.

Your healthcare provider may do a pap test. A swab will be used to scrape cells from your cervix. A pap test checks the health of your cervix and vagina.

Your healthcare provider will check your blood pressure at each visit during your pregnancy.



Do you need a pregnancy test from your healthcare provider if you already did one at home?

You can do a home pregnancy test.

Home pregnancy tests look for the hormone human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) in your urine. This hormone is only there if you are pregnant.

Follow the instructions about when to do the home pregnancy test and how long to wait for the results. Some tests will show the result as a line, a change in colour, or with words.

If your home pregnancy test is positive, see your healthcare providers as soon as possible.

If you do not want to do a test at home, your healthcare provider can do this for you.

Your healthcare provider may do a urine test. It tests for the hCG hormone.

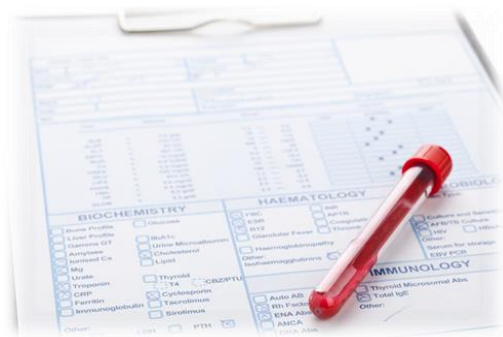
Your healthcare provider can also do a blood test. Blood tests can detect hCG earlier in your pregnancy than urine tests. Blood tests look for two things. The first is whether you are producing hCG. The second is how much hCG you have in your blood. The amount that is in your blood can tell the healthcare provider how long you have been pregnant.



Why do you need a urine test?

During a urine test, a sample of urine (pee) is taken. Follow the instructions of the medical professional. A urine test is done to check for a urinary tract infection, diabetes, and high blood pressure. These conditions can all occur during pregnancy.

What do prenatal blood tests include?



You will be offered prenatal blood tests. You can decide if you want these tests. These tests check the health of you and your baby. The tests include the following:

Complete Blood Count (CBC)

CBC can find problems like low iron in the blood, infections, and clotting problems. Your healthcare provider can then treat these before you deliver your baby.

Hepatitis B (HBV)

HBV is a viral infection of the liver. It can be passed to your baby. HBV can be treated during pregnancy.

Hepatitis C (HCV)

HCV is a viral infection of the liver. It can be passed to your baby. Treatments for HCV cannot be given during pregnancy. Special care will be given when you deliver your baby. If you have HCV, your healthcare provider will test your baby at 18 months of age for the virus. For more information and supports for HCV in pregnancy, visit:

<https://skprevention.ca/sexual-health/hepatitis-c-hcv-and-pregnancy/>.

Blood Type

This test will tell you what your blood type is (A, B, AB, or O).

Rh Factor

The Rh factor is a protein on the surface of the red blood cells. You can either be Rh positive or Rh negative. If you are Rh positive, you have the protein. If you are Rh negative, you do not.

If you are Rh negative and your baby is Rh positive, your body will see the Rh protein in your baby's blood as dangerous. Your body will try to protect you from this danger. This can affect your baby's health. If you are Rh negative, you will need more tests and treatment later in your pregnancy.

Rubella (German measles)

Rubella during pregnancy can cause birth defects. The blood test checks to see if you have antibodies for the virus that causes rubella. Antibodies are cells in your blood that fight infections. Your body makes antibodies when you have a virus or after you are vaccinated. If you do not have rubella antibodies, your healthcare provider may give you a vaccination after your pregnancy.

Syphilis

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI). It can be passed to your baby. Treating syphilis early in pregnancy can prevent the baby from getting it. If syphilis is not treated, it can cause birth defects and even death. For more information on syphilis, visit:

<https://skprevention.ca/sexual-health/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis/syphilis/>.

Why do you need a test for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)?

HIV is a virus that damages the immune system and can lead to AIDS. People can live a long, healthy life with HIV if they get treatment and care.

HIV can be passed from mother to baby during pregnancy, delivery, or after birth.

Mothers living with HIV can pass the virus to their babies in three ways.

1. The placenta joins the mother and baby. Food and oxygen reach baby through the placenta. HIV can pass through the placenta from the mother to baby.
2. The baby can come into contact with the mother's blood while being born.
3. HIV is found in breast milk. The virus can be passed to the baby during breastfeeding.

HIV testing is part of your prenatal blood tests. You can refuse the test. However, HIV does not discriminate. If you have had sex or used injection drugs, you are at risk. If your healthcare provider does not offer you an HIV test, you can ask for it.

If a mother with HIV gets good medical care and treatment, there is less than a 1% chance of passing HIV onto a baby. A mother with HIV can have a healthy baby.

If you are HIV positive, you can stay healthy when you are pregnant.

- Find a healthcare provider who knows about HIV and pregnancy.
- Follow the advice of your healthcare provider.
- Stay on all medications given to you.

One of the ways that HIV can be passed from you to your baby is through breast milk. If you are HIV positive, it is recommended that you do not breastfeed. It is not recommended that another woman breastfeed your baby. In Saskatchewan, infants born to mothers living with HIV qualify for free formula from birth to age one through the

Saskatchewan Infant Formula Program. To access this program, contact the program coordinators listed below.

Prince Albert: 306-765-6535

Regina: 306-766-3915

Saskatoon: 306-655-1783



Why is glucose screening important?

Glucose screening is completed to determine the presence of gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy). Glucose screening is normally done in the second trimester but can be done sooner and more often if a woman is high risk for gestational diabetes or the doctor is concerned about the development of gestational diabetes. Treatment for gestational diabetes is important in order to prevent complications during pregnancy and throughout the life of the woman and child.

What is special testing (genetic screening and testing)?

There are two types of genetic tests: screening and diagnostic. These tests look at the chance that your baby may have a certain condition, like Down syndrome. Both types of tests are optional. You do not have to have them. If you want more information, talk to your healthcare providers about these tests.

Screening Tests

These tests do not tell you for sure if your baby has a condition. These tests tell you whether your baby has an increased risk of having a condition. Screening helps you decide if you want to do further testing.

If your screening results show that there is an **increased risk** that your baby may have a condition, you may want to have a diagnostic test to know for sure. Diagnostic tests are more exact than screening tests. They can diagnose a condition.

There are a lot of questions to ask yourself before you choose genetic screening.

- How do I feel about having my baby screened for a condition?
- Will the results change my feelings about my pregnancy?
- Will I want to continue with diagnostic testing?
- If I have a diagnostic test that tells me my baby has a condition, will I want to continue the pregnancy?
- Will the results of the tests help me prepare for the future?

The screening tests are prenatal maternal serum screening, nuchal translucency measurement, and non-invasive prenatal test. You can have all three tests.

Prenatal Maternal Serum Screening

Prenatal maternal serum screening is a blood test. This test is done between the 11th and 20th week of pregnancy. It is usually done more than once.

There is no risk to you or your baby.

The cost of this test is covered by Saskatchewan Health.

Nuchal Translucency Measurement

Nuchal translucency measurement is a type of ultrasound. It measures the clear (translucent) fluid in the tissue at the back of your baby's neck. Babies with certain conditions have lots of fluid in the back of their necks.

This test is done between 11 and 14 weeks of pregnancy.

There is no risk to you or your baby.

The cost of this test is covered by Saskatchewan Health.

Non-Invasive Prenatal Test

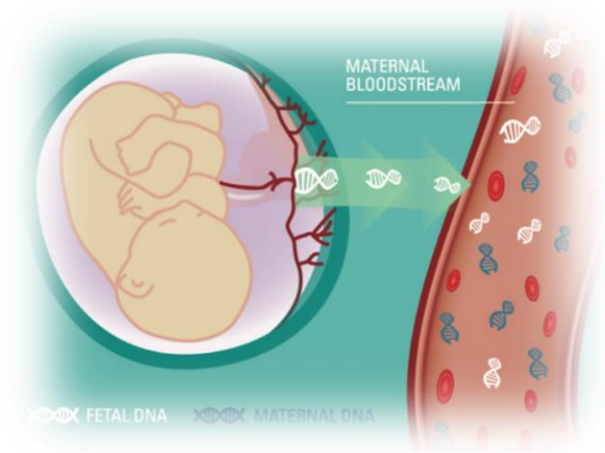
Non-invasive prenatal test is a more accurate screening test than prenatal maternal serum screening and nuchal translucency measurement.

When you are pregnant, your blood has your baby's DNA in it. DNA carries genetic information. Our genes give instructions to our bodies about how to develop. This test analyzes your baby's DNA that is found in a sample of your blood.

This test is done at 10 weeks or later. You will have blood taken from your arm just like a regular blood test.

The test costs as much as \$800.00 and is not covered by Saskatchewan Health.

There is no risk to you or your baby.



Diagnostic Tests

If your screening results show that there is an increased risk of your baby having a condition, you may want to know for sure.

The diagnostic tests you can have are amniocentesis and chorionic villus sampling (CVS). These tests look for chromosome abnormalities found in conditions such as Down syndrome.

Chromosomes are the structures in our bodies that hold our genes. Genes give instructions to our bodies about how to develop. We have 46 chromosomes that form into 23 pairs. There are several ways that chromosome abnormalities can occur. For example, abnormalities can occur when there are more than 23 pairs or less than 23 pairs. Abnormalities can also occur if there is a pair that has 3 instead of 2 chromosomes.

Both CVS and amniocentesis will give you the same results. Only one test is needed.

Both tests are not offered to every pregnant woman because there is a small risk of miscarriage associated with the procedures. It is offered only to women who:

- will be 40 years of age or over at the time of delivery

- are at increased risk of having a child with a chromosome problem or an inherited genetic disorder for which prenatal diagnosis is available
- have had an abnormal nuchal translucency ultrasound or positive non-invasive prenatal screening test and results indicate an increased risk of a condition such as Down syndrome.

Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS)

CVS is done between 11 and 14 weeks of pregnancy. A thin needle is passed through the abdomen or cervix into the placenta. A sample of your placenta is taken to be tested. There is a small chance of miscarriage after this test.

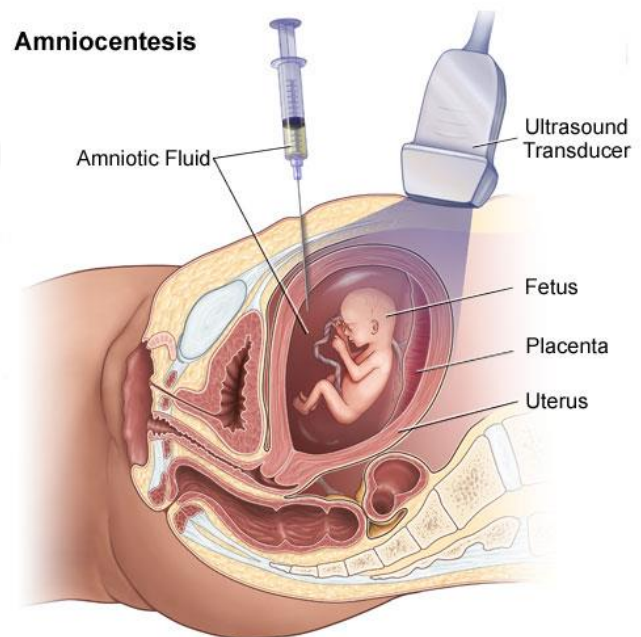
CVS is not done in Saskatchewan; therefore, travel out of province is required. The cost of this procedure is covered by Saskatchewan Health, but travel costs are not covered.

Amniocentesis

An amniocentesis is done between 15 and 18 weeks of pregnancy. A needle is passed through the abdomen and uterus into the amniotic sac. A small amount of fluid is removed from the amniotic sac and tested.

There is a small chance of miscarriage after this test.

The cost of this procedure and genetic testing is covered by Saskatchewan Health.



For more information about genetic testing in Saskatchewan or to talk to a genetic counsellor, call: 306-655-1692 or email: medicalgenetics@saskatoonhealthregion.ca.

What is an ultrasound?

The purpose of an ultrasound is to see if your baby is growing and developing normally. The technician will put gel on your stomach and run a probe over it. The probe sends sound waves that will bounce off your baby and form a picture. An ultrasound cannot hurt you or your baby.

The first ultrasound is usually done in the 4th month. Sometimes your healthcare providers may want you to have an ultrasound earlier. An ultrasound can determine your due date and tell you if you are pregnant with more than one baby.

If your baby is too small to be seen clearly, you may need to have a vaginal ultrasound. You will be asked to lie on your back with your knees bent. A probe covered with gel will be placed in your vagina. The probe sends sound waves through your vaginal wall. These bounce off the baby and form a picture.