



STRONG  HEALTH

REPRODUCTIVE GENETICS
DIVISION OF MATERNAL FETAL MEDICINE
DEPARTMENT OF OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

AMNIOCENTESIS

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Pregnancy is a time of great expectation and concern. Prenatal diagnosis is available to provide more information about the health of your baby.

Most babies are born healthy. But every year, there are about 2 or 3 out of 100 who are born with a serious birth defect. Some of these birth defects can be tested for using prenatal diagnosis (ultrasound and amniocentesis).

I. When is amniocentesis done?

Usually, amniocentesis is done after 16 weeks of pregnancy. This is the safest time to do the test.

II. How is it done?

The procedure takes about 30 minutes. Your husband or partner is welcome to be there. You can eat before your appointment. You will need to have a full bladder for the ultrasound exam.

- 1) **Ultrasound** – This test uses sound waves to check your uterus, the placenta and the fetus. There is no known risk to the fetus from ultrasound. During the ultrasound examination, the doctor can help you see the fetus.
- 2) **Amniocentesis** – This test is done by an obstetrician who is experienced in doing amniocentesis. A thin, hollow needle is placed through the abdomen into the uterus (womb) and a small amount of liquid around the fetus is taken out. There is only a little discomfort for most women. The fetus will make more fluid in a few hours.



Most women are fine after the amniocentesis, but a few have mild cramping like they have before a menstrual period. The doctor doing the test will remind you to take it easy for about 24 hours after the test.

III. What are the risks involved?

Amniocentesis is a safe test when done by a skilled obstetrician using ultrasound. Previous studies have not shown it to be risky, but there is a small chance of infection, miscarriage, bleeding or loss of fluid.

The chance of a miscarriage is less than 1 chance in 300. Other problems such as bleeding or fluid occur in only a small number of women.

IV. What kind of result will I be getting?

Usually two tests are done.

- 1) **Chromosome analysis** – Chromosome analysis rules out birth defects like Down Syndrome. Cells that are in the amniotic fluid are grown in the laboratory so the chromosomes inside the cells can be checked. This test is very reliable.
- 2) **Alpha-fetoprotein** – This test will help rule out a neural tube defect like spina bifida or anencephaly.

In certain situations, other tests can be done. The genetic counselor will tell you if these are possible or necessary.



Normal amniocentesis results do not guarantee a normal baby. There are many birth defects that amniocentesis cannot pick up.

V. How will I get my results?

The results usually take 1 1/2 to 2 weeks to complete. Your doctor will be notified of the results. Then, either your doctor or the genetic counselor will contact you.

If you have any further questions, please call your genetic counselor

(_____) at 275-3304.