

Before or around 10-12 weeks pregnant, we may be able to hear your baby's heartbeat for the first time. The heartbeat can typically be heard with an ultrasound machine or a special instrument called a Doppler.

Between 15-22 weeks (ideally 15-18 weeks), you will be offered an optional blood test for a genetic screen called a Maternal Serum Alpha Fetoprotein (MSAFP), a Quad screen, or non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT).

The Quad screening test measures four substances in the mother's blood to detect potential elevations that may need further attention. Elevations with these substances can help detect Down syndrome or a birth defect around the baby's umbilical cord or along the spinal cord. This is only a screening. A positive result does not mean your baby has one of these conditions, but simply means we need to take a closer look.

Around 20 weeks, you will be ordered a comprehensive ultrasound to check on your baby. This ultrasound is the big one that looks at all of your baby's organs and makes sure they are growing appropriately. This ultrasound will NOT be done at the health department. Location of testing will vary depending on local resources. You will be contacted about when this appointment is to occur.

Around 24 weeks, we will make arrangements for you to take a glucose tolerance test (GTT) to see if you have Gestational Diabetes. We will also check lab work to see if you are anemic. If your initial blood work showed your blood type was Rh negative, you will have blood work to check on this, as well.

At approximately 28 weeks, you will be offered the Tdap vaccination. This helps protect your baby from whooping cough, which can be deadly for young infants. Babies are not born with a robust immune system; however, mom can pass on protection to her newborn when she is given the injection at this time. If you have a negative blood type, you should expect to receive a RhoGAM injection at this visit. This is very important to prevent your baby from developing a specific type of anemia that can occur if you have a negative blood type and they have a positive blood type.

Around your 36-week mark, a Group B strep (GBS) swab will be collected. GBS is a type of bacteria that lives in the mother's gastrointestinal system. It causes no harm to the mother, but if she has overgrowth, it can enter the vaginal tract and pass onto baby during delivery. Babies who encounter these bacteria can develop Group B strep pneumonia. To prevent this, mothers who test positive on this swab are given antibiotics during delivery to help protect the baby.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONAL PRENATAL TESTS? ---

Early in your pregnancy we will obtain a family history from you to assess risk factors for specific genetic disorders and will discuss these findings and their implications for your pregnancy.

All pregnant women, regardless of age, can be tested for certain genetic disorders which are caused by chromosomal abnormalities.

You have three options:

1. No testing for genetic disorders (routine ultrasounds and lab tests are still performed).