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What is nuchal translucency screening?

Nuchal translucency screening is a test that may be done during pregnancy. An ultrasound is used to view and measure an area of skin and fluid collection on the back of the neck of the fetus, known as the nuchal area. This test is used to check the risk that a fetus may have for Down syndrome, heart defects, and other birth defects.

When is it used?

The test is done between the 11th and 14th weeks of pregnancy. Your healthcare provider may advise you to have this test if:

- You are in your first trimester of pregnancy.
- You are at higher risk for having a baby with birth defects due to your age.
- You have a history of a birth defect in a previous pregnancy.
- You or the father of the baby have a family history of birth defects.

Not all insurance covers nuchal translucency screening. Some states have laws that require certain tests for pregnant women and newborns. Check your insurance coverage and the laws of your state.



How do I prepare for nuchal translucency screening?

Nuchal translucency screening is done by ultrasound. You need to drink a large amount of fluids to fill your bladder before the test.

What happens during nuchal translucency screening?

During this test, an ultrasound sensor, which uses sound waves to see a picture of the fetus, is placed on your abdomen or in the vagina. The trained healthcare professional performing the test will measure the area on the back of the neck of the fetus. Other measurements may be done during this ultrasound test also.

What happens after nuchal translucency screening?

The results of the test will be reviewed by your healthcare provider and may be compared with other blood tests that your provider may have ordered.

What are the benefits of nuchal translucency screening?

If the test detects an increased risk for a problem, you will be able to receive counseling and referrals that will help you prepare for any problems the baby may have, including treatment options, support groups, and financial assistance.

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What are the risks associated with nuchal translucency screening?

This test cannot tell you if your baby will definitely have a problem. If the test detects a possible problem, other, more invasive tests will be needed to confirm the results. Other tests may include amniocentesis, which involves taking fluid samples from inside the uterus.

When should I call my healthcare provider?

Call your healthcare provider if you have any questions about the test results.

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