

Noninvasive Prenatal Testing: Should I Take It?



Noninvasive prenatal testing (NIPT) is a screening option for expectant mothers to help identify genetic abnormalities in the fetus's DNA. While it's not mandatory, undergoing this test during pregnancy can offer valuable insights into the potential risk of specific genetic disorders for the unborn child, helping expecting parents in making informed decisions.

How Noninvasive Prenatal Testing Works

During noninvasive prenatal testing, some of the baby's DNA is present in the mother's bloodstream. A small sample of the mother's blood is then taken to a lab, where they examine the tiny bits of the baby's DNA closely for certain abnormalities. It is a completely safe test that does no harm to the mom or the baby.



What Does Noninvasive Prenatal Testing Find?

Noninvasive prenatal testing does not screen for all chromosomal or genetic conditions, but here are the ones it does screen for:

- Down syndrome (trisomy 21)
- Edwards syndrome (trisomy 18)
- Patau syndrome (trisomy 13)
- Disorders affecting the sex chromosomes



When is Noninvasive Prenatal Testing Not Helpful?

While NIPT is generally safe and recommended, there are specific situations in which expecting mothers shouldn't take it. Here are just a few of them:

- **If you're carrying fraternal twins or multiple babies.** Having more than one baby inside you can make the screening less accurate. It's tricky to tell each baby's DNA apart in the mom's blood, so the results might not give the full picture or an accurate result.
- **If you're early on in your pregnancy.** NIPT is usually suggested between 9-10 weeks into pregnancy. Before this, there might not be enough of the baby's DNA in the mother's blood for the test to work well.
- **If you have a high BMI.** Women with a high body mass index might get less accurate results because a high BMI can make the fetal DNA in the mother's blood more diluted.



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- **If you've recently had blood transfusion or an organ transplant.** After a blood transfusion or an organ transplant, altered DNA from the donor may be in the mother's blood which can affect the accuracy of the result.



It's important to understand that noninvasive prenatal testing is a screening and not a diagnostic test. In other words, the screening does not diagnose a condition, it only shows you if there's a chance of the condition existing. Also, know that results aren't always perfect and vary from test to test.