

Testing During Pregnancy

Nonstress Test (NST)

Mothers and babies who need special medical care and attention may need an NST. An NST is a simple, painless test that monitors your baby's heartbeat. We will listen to and record the baby's heartbeat while the baby is resting and while the baby is moving. It usually takes about 20 to 40 minutes to complete the test. To prepare for your test, it is important to make sure you:

- Eat a meal or snack within 1-2 hours
- Have plenty of water to drink
- Do not smoke 1-2 hours prior to your test

Following these steps will help to get a more accurate test and not take longer than expected.

Why is an NST performed?

You may need an NST for the following conditions:

Diabetes

A smaller baby or baby is not growing properly

Past your due date

Advanced maternal age (over 35 at the time of delivery)

Too much fluid around the baby

High blood pressure

Baby is less active

Twin pregnancy

Body Mass Index 40 or greater

Other complications of pregnancy

Who will do the test?

A registered nurse will perform your NST. The test result will be reviewed by a provider.

When will I have an NST?

An NST is usually done once or twice a week. You may also have ultrasounds and see a provider.

What can I expect during the NST?

- You will sit in a recliner with two monitors attached to your abdomen. One monitor records the baby's heartbeat and movement. The other records any contractions of your uterus.
- We will be looking at the baby's movement and heart rate. Just as your heart beats faster when you run up a flight of stairs, your baby's heart should beat faster when kicking and moving. This is a sign of fetal well-being.
- A provider will review the results. If your test is non-reactive you may need an ultrasound called a "biophysical profile" following your NST.

Biophysical Profile (BPP)

A BPP is a simple, painless ultrasound to check the overall well-being of your baby. A sonographer will use an ultrasound machine to look at your baby's movement, amniotic fluid and breathing movements. You do not need to arrive with a full bladder for this test. This test can take up to 30 minutes. Please make sure you have eaten, had plenty of water to drink and do not smoke before your test.

Why is a BPP performed?

You may need a BPP if you have one or more of the following conditions:

Diabetes

A smaller baby or baby is not growing properly

Past your due date

Advanced maternal age (over 35 at the time of delivery)

Too much fluid around the baby

High blood pressure

Baby is less active

Twin pregnancy

Body Mass Index 40 or greater

Other complications of pregnancy

What can I expect during the test?

- A sonographer will use an ultrasound to look at your baby's position and movement. They will also measure the fluid around the baby and look to see if your baby is practicing breathing movements.
- After the test, a provider will review the results and may recommend further testing.