

Antenatal or Antepartal Testing

Antenatal or Antepartal Testing

Antenatal or antepartal means “before birth.” Your health care provider wants you to have two special tests (a non-stress test and a biophysical profile) to check the well-being of your baby while they are still in the uterus. The tests can also be done if you are expecting twins, triplets or more.

You may need antenatal or antepartal testing if:

- you are at risk for high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease
- your pregnancy lasts longer than 40 weeks
- there is slow fetal growth.

A nurse will perform both tests, which are painless.

Before the Tests

- Eat a good breakfast and lunch before your test. Your baby will likely be more active if you have eaten.
- If you smoke, do not smoke for 2 hours before the test. This will make sure that the health care providers are testing your baby’s normal heart rate without the effects of nicotine.
- Wear comfortable clothing.
- Arrive at the hospital a few minutes early to check in, present your insurance card and fill out any needed forms.

Visitors

You may bring an adult with you to the tests. If you have children, please make arrangements for their care at home.

Non-stress Test

The non-stress test (NST) is done with a fetal monitor.

- You will lie on a bed. (You may be asked to sit in a chair.)
- The nurse will place two flat, round sensors (transducers) on your abdomen.
- The sensors monitor your baby’s heart rate and your contractions. The fetal monitor records the activity and prints it on a strip of paper.
- The nurse will read the paper strips and find your baby’s resting heart rate. They will compare this rate to periods of movement. The baby’s heart rate usually increases with movement.
- The nurse can tell if your baby is receiving enough oxygen through the placenta and your circulatory system.
- The test takes about 20 to 40 minutes.

Biophysical Profile

- The biophysical profile is done with ultrasound.
- You will lie on a bed or table. (You may be asked to sit in a chair.)

(over)

- The nurse will squeeze warmed ultrasound gel onto your abdomen.
- They will move a wand (called a transducer) over your abdomen.
- Ultrasound uses low energy sound waves to create images on a monitor.
- Using the images, the nurse can see your baby's arm, leg and full body movements. The test also measures your baby's practice breathing and the amount of amniotic fluid around your baby. (The test does not include an estimate of your baby's weight.)
- The nurse will watch your baby for about 30 minutes.

Note: An ultrasound technician may perform the BPP if the doctor needs more information about you or your baby.

After The Tests

The doctor will look at the test results and explain them to you before you leave. They will give the results to your regular health care provider.

How Often You Need The Testing

Your health care provider will tell you how often testing is needed. In general, the tests are done 1 or 2 times a week.