

Routine and Special Tests During Pregnancy

Maternal Serum Screening

What is it?

Maternal serum screening (MSS) is a blood test used to find out the likelihood that you are carrying a baby with Down's syndrome, trisomy 18, or open neural tube defects such as spina bifida and anencephaly. MSS measures hormones made by your baby or placenta that can be found in your blood. MSS is done between 15 and 18 weeks of pregnancy; however, the best time to test is 16 weeks into pregnancy.

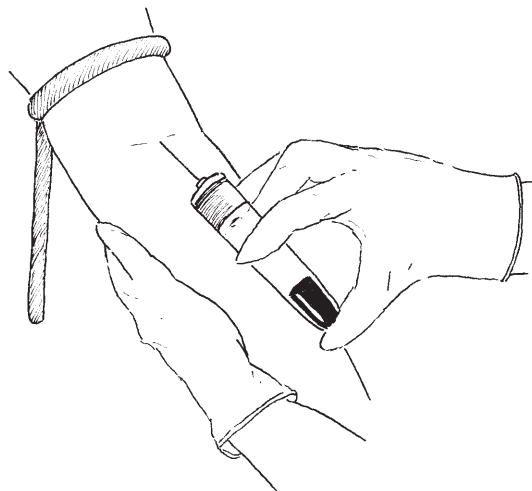
What does it determine?

MSS determines the chance that you may have a baby with certain conditions. A negative screen result means that your risk of having a baby with Down's syndrome, trisomy 18, or open neural tube defects is lower than average for your age. A negative screen result does not rule out other birth defects. In rare cases, MSS may miss detection of Down's syndrome, trisomy 18, or neural tube defects.

A positive screen result means that your probable risk of having a baby with Down's syndrome, trisomy 18, or open neural tube defects is high. If you have a positive screen result, your doctor will do more tests, such as an ultrasound or amniocentesis to confirm whether your baby may have any of these conditions.

Why is it done?

MSS provides some information to you and your doctor about the health of your baby. MSS shows the chance of your baby being born with certain birth defects. It is your choice whether to have the MSS test. Knowing that your baby may have a special condition when he or she is born helps you to make better choices and prepare for your baby's arrival. You may choose not to have the MSS test done if you do not want to know if your baby is at risk.



How will it affect my baby or me?

The MSS test consists of a blood test. There are no known risks for you or your baby if you take this test. If further tests show that your baby has Down's syndrome, trisomy 18, or open neural tube defects, this information can help you to plan your baby's delivery. You will also have the chance to learn about the help there is for children with Down's syndrome, trisomy 18, and neural tube defects. You may take special care of yourself and your baby during your pregnancy if you know that your baby may have Down's syndrome, trisomy 18, or open neural tube defects.

Information for this article was adapted from:

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