



# Prenatal Screening Options for Your Pregnancy

Women's Health Clinic

**Welcome to Ridgecrest Regional Hospital's Women's Health Clinic.**

*Congratulations on your pregnancy! We are so happy you chose us to share your exciting journey!*

During your pregnancy, we offer several optional screening tests to help check on your baby's health. These tests are screening tests. They tell us if there may be an increased chance of certain conditions, but they do not give a definite diagnosis. If a screening test comes back with a concerning result, we will talk with you about next steps.

**All of these tests are voluntary.**

You have the right to accept or decline any or all of them. Your decision will not affect the quality of care you receive.

## Test 1: NIPT (Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing)

**What it is:** A simple blood draw from your arm. The test looks at tiny pieces of your baby's DNA that are found in your blood.

**What it screens for:** Increased chance of certain chromosome conditions, including Down syndrome, trisomy 18, and trisomy 13. It can also check for sex chromosome differences and, if you wish, can tell you the baby's sex.

**When it is done:** As early as 10 weeks of pregnancy.

**How accurate is it?** NIPT is the most accurate screening test available for Down syndrome (detects more than 99% of cases). However, it is still a screening test: an abnormal result needs to be confirmed with further testing.

**Important to know:** In rare cases, the test may not return a result and may need to be repeated. NIPT does not check for all possible conditions.

**Approximate cost:** Through the California Prenatal Screening Program, NIPT may be offered at reduced or no cost depending on your insurance and screening pathway. If billed privately, costs typically range from \$0 to \$250+ depending on your insurance plan. Medi-Cal covers NIPT. If you are unsure of coverage, please reach out to your insurance carrier for details.

## Test 2: AFP (Alpha-Fetoprotein) Screening

**What it is:** A simple blood draw from your arm that measures a protein called alpha-fetoprotein, which is made by your baby.

**What it screens for:** Neural tube defects (problems with the baby's brain or spine, such as spina bifida). Abnormal AFP levels can also sometimes point to other concerns, including certain chromosome conditions or pregnancy complications.

**When it is done:** Between 15 and 22 weeks of pregnancy (best between 16 and 18 weeks).

**How accurate is it?** AFP screening detects about 80% of open neural tube defects. An abnormal result does not mean there is definitely a problem; it means further evaluation (usually an ultrasound) is recommended.

**Important to know:** The most common reason for an abnormal AFP result is incorrect pregnancy dating. AFP screening is part of the California Prenatal Screening Program and is recommended even if you have already had NIPT, because NIPT does not screen for neural tube defects.

**Approximate cost:** The California Prenatal Screening Program covers the cost of AFP screening for most patients. Medi-Cal and most private insurance plans cover this test. Please ask our staff about your specific coverage.

### Test 3: QHerit28 (Carrier Screening Blood Test)

**What it is:** A simple blood draw from your arm. The lab analyzes your DNA to determine whether you are a “carrier” of any of 28 inherited (genetic) conditions. No questionnaire is required; this is a blood test only.

**What does “carrier” mean?** A carrier is a person who has one copy of a gene change (variant) for a genetic condition but does not have the condition themselves and usually has no symptoms. However, if both you and your baby's father are carriers of the same condition, there is a 1 in 4 (25%) chance with each pregnancy that the baby could be affected.

**What conditions does it screen for?** The QHerit28 panel screens for 28 conditions that can be passed from parent to child, including but not limited to:

- Sickle Cell disease
- Beta Thalassemia and other hemoglobin disorders
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Spinal muscular atrophy (SMA)
- Tay-Sachs disease
- Fragile X syndrome
- And other inherited conditions

**When it is done:** Ideally at your first prenatal visit or even before pregnancy. The blood draw is done at the same time as your other routine prenatal labs, so no extra visit is needed. This test is only done once in a lifetime. It is not needed for each pregnancy.

**How accurate is it?** Carrier screening is highly accurate for the conditions it tests for, but no test can detect every possible gene change. A negative result greatly reduces, but does not completely eliminate, the chance that you are a carrier.

**What happens if I am found to be a carrier?** Being a carrier does not mean your baby will be affected. If you are found to be a carrier, your baby's father will be offered testing for the same condition. If both parents are carriers of the same condition, you will be referred to a genetic counselor to discuss your options, which may include additional testing during pregnancy.

**Important to know:** Most carriers are healthy and have no family history of the condition. That is why this blood test is offered to all pregnant women, regardless of ethnic background or family history. This test does not screen for all genetic conditions. It focuses on 28 specific conditions that are among the most common inherited disorders. Carrier screening does not replace newborn screening, which is done after birth.

**Approximate cost:** Some insurance plans, including Medi-Cal, may cover carrier screening. Out-of-pocket costs vary depending on your insurance plan and the laboratory used. For most patients, out-of-pocket cost is a maximum of \$25. In the rare case that testing is not covered, the maximum out-of-pocket cost to the patient is \$299.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Are these tests required?**

No. All prenatal screening is optional. You may choose to accept or decline any or all of these tests. Your decision will not affect the quality of care you receive.

### **What happens if a result is abnormal?**

Your provider will explain the results and discuss options with you. This may include additional blood tests, a detailed ultrasound, genetic counseling, or diagnostic testing such as amniocentesis. Through the California Prenatal Screening Program, follow-up services for screen-positive results on NIPT and AFP, including genetic counseling, ultrasound, and diagnostic testing, are covered at no additional cost.

### **Can I change my mind?**

Yes. You can decide to have a test later, even if you initially declined, as long as it is still within the appropriate time window for that test.

### **Will these tests tell me everything about my baby's health?**

No. These screening tests check for specific conditions only. A normal result is reassuring but does not guarantee a baby without any health issues. Your provider will continue to monitor your pregnancy throughout.



## Patient Acknowledgment and Consent

---

I have read and understand the information above about the prenatal screening tests offered at this clinic. I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that these are screening tests, not diagnostic tests, and that all testing is voluntary.

**Please check one box for each test:**

### NIPT (Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing)

---

- ☐ I ACCEPT NIPT (Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing)
- ☐ I DECLINE NIPT (Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing)

### AFP (Alpha-Fetoprotein) Screening

---

- ☐ I ACCEPT AFP (Alpha-Fetoprotein) Screening
- ☐ I DECLINE AFP (Alpha-Fetoprotein) Screening

### Carrier Screening

---

- ☐ I ACCEPT Carrier Screening Blood Test
- ☐ I DECLINE Carrier Screening Blood Test
  
- ☐ I AM UNDECIDED. I have reviewed the provided material and will provide my decision at a later time.

**Patient Name (Print):**

---

**Patient Signature:**

---

**Date:**

---

**Gestational Age (weeks):**

---

**Witness/Staff Signature:**

---

**MRN:**

---

---

*This handout is for informational purposes only and does not replace a conversation with your healthcare provider. If you have questions, please ask a member of our care team.*

**Ridgecrest Regional Hospital • Women's Health Clinic**