

Prenatal Testing

PREGNANCY, MOTHERHOOD MALAYSIA

ARTICLE

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When you find out you are pregnant, you need to consult your gynecologist who will recommend a series of tests. This article tells you why these tests are important for you and your baby.

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Finding out you're pregnant

Being pregnant is a joy. But each pregnancy must be taken care of, to ensure the safety and comfort of both you and your child.

The first thing you should do after finding out you're pregnant is to book an appointment with your GP. Your GP will chat with you and answer any initial questions you may have. Your GP may also recommend a gynecologist, if you don't already have one.

Prenatal Testing

Prenatal tests can detect some potential problems early so that steps can be taken to ensure the best possible outcome for you and your baby.

Some screening tests are performed on almost all pregnant women. Other screening tests are performed only if the parents have specific risk factors for certain conditions.

Diagnostic tests can also be done to determine if your child is at risk of developing certain conditions or to provide additional information about your baby.

Your healthcare professional can best advise which prenatal tests are most appropriate for you. Our guide provides an overview of common prenatal tests.

Blood test

Who is tested: Almost all pregnant women

When: Usually at first prenatal visit

How: Blood drawn from your arm is examined in a laboratory

What this test checks:

- **Blood type and presence of Rh antibody**

Why: If your foetus's blood has the Rh antibody (usually called "Rh positive") and your body lacks the Rh antigen (usually called "Rh negative"), problems may arise. Your body may react as if it were allergic to the foetus. However, if health care professionals are aware of this situation, you will receive special care during pregnancy to help prevent complications.

- **Hematocrit and hemoglobin levels**

Why: These levels help check for anemia, a common complication of pregnancy that often results from iron deficiency. Anemia can make you less able to tolerate hemorrhage during delivery, and can increase the risk of infection. It may also increase the risk of low birth weight and preterm delivery. If iron deficiency anemia exists, it can be treated with therapeutic doses of iron.

- **Presence of syphilis**

Why: If you have this sexually transmitted disease, you should be treated to avoid transmitting it to your child.

- **Presence of rubella immunity**

Why: If your test shows that you are not immune to rubella, also called German measles, you should avoid contact with anyone who has the disease while you are pregnant and get vaccinated after your child is born. Rubella can cause birth defects if contracted during pregnancy.

- **Presence of chickenpox immunity**

Why: If your test shows that you are not immune to chickenpox, you should avoid contact with anyone who has the disease while you are pregnant. Chickenpox can cause birth defects if contracted during pregnancy.

- **Presence of hepatitis B virus**

Why: If you have this infection, you and your child should be treated.

- **Presence of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)**

Why: HIV is the virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). If you have this infection, you can be given medication to reduce the risk of transmitting it to your child.

Risks: None

Share the news

Telling friends and family is one of the most fun things about pregnancy. Some people wait until 12 weeks or until after the first scan. Others tell everyone right from the start. It's up to you.

Learn

Information sources like this website and books can be a great way to find out more and start getting to grips with the idea you're pregnant. You can find out how your child is developing each week, what to expect next and how to prepare. Enrolling for antenatal classes is another great way to learn with others going through the same thing.

Look after yourself

Getting plenty of rest, eating well and exercising are all ways to help make sure you have a healthy pregnancy.

Get support

Talking with friends, family and healthcare professionals is so important. They can answer your questions and relieve any worries you have. It's also good to find other women in your area expecting at the same time, so you can share the experience together.

Enjoy

It's only 9 months or so, so why not make the most of it?

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