PRENATAL SCREENING

Genetics & IVF Institute

SCREENING TESTS such as FTS, NIPT, and ECS during pregnancy determine which pregnancies are at more or less risk for certain medical conditions. Blood tests and ultrasounds are common screening tests in pregnancy. Screening tests are easily performed and offer no risk to the pregnancy to obtain the information.

WHO SHOULD CONSIDER PRENATAL SCREENING TESTS?

All patients who would like information about the health of their pregnancy should consider their prenatal screening options. Screening is recommended for pregnant patients of all ages, regardless of their prior pregnancy history, their family history, or their ethnicity. Screening provides information to help guide pregnancy management for you and your physician.

WHAT IS FIRST TRIMESTER SCREENING (FTS)?

FTS is a screening that combines a blood test, a specialized ultrasound, and patient information such as their age. It estimates the chances for three common chromosome abnormalities in pregnancies: trisomy 21 (Down syndrome), trisomy 18 (Edwards syndrome), and trisomy 13 (Patau syndrome). Each of these conditions can occur in any pregnancy and can cause both physical and developmental abnormalities.

FIRST TRIMESTER SCREENING (FTS) OFFERS EVERY PREGNANT PATIENT:

- A highly accurate, personalized risk assessment
- A non-invasive first step to determine if additional follow-up is appropriate
- Earlier information than second trimester options

FIRST TRIMESTER SCREENING STEPS

HOW IS FTS PERFORMED?

An FTS involves having a fetal ultrasound and a simple blood draw from the patient's arm to measure pregnancy proteins in the blood. During the ultrasound, measurements are taken to assess fetal growth and development. The nuchal translucency is measured (this is a fluid filled area at the back of the fetal neck) and the fetal nasal bone is assessed. Genetics & IVF Institute is a leading provider of FTS in Northern Virginia

WHAT WILL MY FTS RESULTS TELL ME?

The FTS will determine the specific chances for trisomy 21, 18, and 13 in the current pregnancy. In some pregnancies, the FTS results indicate these trisomies are unlikely, but that a different genetic disorder or birth defect is present. One of our genetics specialists will discuss results with you and provide guidance if additional testing or evaluations are recommended.

WHAT IS NIPT AND HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM FTS?

NIPT, also called cell-free DNA screening, is another prenatal screening option. It is a blood test that screens for trisomy 21, 18, and 13 as well as sex chromosome information. The lab methodologies are different than FTS, however, and as with all genetic tests, there can be both benefits and limitations to any screening. NIPT can be obtained at Genetics & IVF Institute.

WHAT IS EXPANDED CARRIER SCREENING (ECS)?

ECS is unrelated to FTS and NIPT. It is a genetic test performed on adults to screen for genetic disease(s) a person may silently carry but never develop themselves. Results on the parents determine the probabilities for specific genetic diseases to occur in a pregnancy. If a risk is identified, follow-up testing can determine if a pregnancy is affected with that disease. Additionally, preimplantation genetic testing is available to prevent transmission of the disease to future offspring. Everyone carries multiple genetic diseases, even if they and their family members have no symptoms. Thus, ECS is recommended for all individuals regardless of family history or ethnicity. ECS can be obtained at Genetics & IVF Institute.

Harvey J. Stern
MD, PhD, FACMG, FAAP
Director of Reproductive Genetics & the Fetal Diagnostics Center

Mary C. Sands
MS, CGC
Licensed, Certified Genetic Counselor

HOW DO I SCHEDULE MY SCREENING APPOINTMENT?

Patients should call **703-698-7355** to request a prenatal screening appointment with Genetics & IVF Institute. As part of your care, you will have a consultation with one of our genetics specialists, who will provide guidance regarding your current pregnancy and your genetic testing plan. We look forward to being a part of your parenting journey.