

About Genetic Testing (#19)

There are two categories of genetic testing that infertility patients may undergo: those done before a pregnancy is achieved, and those done after a pregnancy is documented.

You may need to have genetic testing before becoming pregnant if:

1. You or your partner have a familial disorder that can be passed on via genes? (You both should be tested, one of you could be a “carrier” of a gene that could result in problems for your offspring.)
2. If you have had several miscarriages?
3. If the male has no sperm in the ejaculate, chromosomal testing should be done if testicular sperm extraction is being considered

You may need to have one of several genetic tests while you are pregnant (amniocentesis or chorionic villae sampling): Consider the following questions before having a test

1. Do you understand the potential risks of infection or pregnancy loss from having the procedure?
2. Who will inform you about the test results? How long does it take to get test results? Can you be assured that all results will be given to you in person?
3. Have you and your partner discussed whether you would terminate a pregnancy depending on test results?
4. Have you decided whether you want to be told the sex of the baby?
5. Is your chart marked indicating if you do not want to know this information?
6. Have you carefully reviewed the informed consent before you sign it?
7. Do you realize that even after seeing a genetic counselor and signing a consent form, you can refuse to do a procedure if you feel uncomfortable doing so?

Following a genetic testing procedure:

1. Find out exactly what is "normal" to experience after the testing.
2. Find out what is abnormal, what are the "danger" signs to watch for.

3. Are there recommended restrictions in physical activity after the test is done?
4. Find out who you should call if you have any unusual symptoms following the procedure. If there is a weekend or holiday following your test, find out which doctor is on duty and how to reach them. Clarify if you should call the doctor who did the testing or if you should call your obstetrician.

*After CVS or amniocentesis, the baby's heartbeat will be monitored carefully. Usually, the doctor suggests resting for at least 24 hours after the test and avoiding heavy lifting or sexual intercourse. After the procedure, report any of the following to your doctor immediately: leakage of clear fluid, vaginal bleeding, heavy cramping or rise in body temperature.

Following the amniocentesis procedure, there may be a tiny amount of bleeding at the puncture site. However, if blood or clear fluid continues to seep out of the puncture wound, the doctor should be notified. Take your temperature every six hours for 24 hours following the procedure and immediately report any rise in temperature to your doctor. Also, your doctor should be notified if you have any vaginal bleeding or spotting.

Further information on this topic is available through RESOLVE fact sheets. For a publications order form, go online to www.resolve.org. You can also contact RESOLVE Headquarters at 1760 Old Meadow Rd, Ste 500, McLean, VA 22102 or 703.556.7172.

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