



AFP (Alpha-Fetoprotein) Test

What is the AFP test?

This test screens for certain genetic abnormalities in the fetus by measuring the level of alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) in a pregnant person's blood. The AFP test is a blood draw, usually done between 15 and 20 weeks of pregnancy. The level of AFP is dependent on gestational age and number of fetuses, so we make sure this information is accurate on the lab order.

What do the results mean?

AFP is a protein that is made by a developing baby, and it is normal for some to pass into the pregnant person's blood. If levels are higher or lower than normal, it may mean that your baby is at increased risk for:

- A neural tube defect, such as Spina Bifida or Anencephaly
- An abdominal wall defect, such as gastroschisis
- Chromosomal abnormalities, such as Down Syndrome (Important to note: if you had a negative NIPS result then your baby is NOT at increased risk for Down Syndrome)

What happens if levels are too high or too low?

This test is not diagnostic. That means that further testing, like a detailed ultrasound at UVMCC, will be recommended for abnormal levels.

Should I get this test?

The anatomy scan you will have at 20 weeks will also screen for these conditions, but starting the diagnostic process before then allows for an earlier termination of pregnancy, if this is desired by the parents. Many people choose to wait until the 20 week scan to screen for genetic abnormalities, especially with a negative NIPS test.