FP+ Screening

Would you want to take a simple test to let you know if you have a higher than average chance of having a baby with certain birth defects?

You were told you had an increased risk, would you want further testing to tell for sure?

You think the answer to these questions is "yes," then you should consider Maternal Serum AFP+ (Quad) screening.

What is AFP+ Screening?

P+ Screening measures the levels of certain substances (alpha-fetoprotein (AFP), unconjugated estriol, human chorionic gonadotropin, and Inhibin-A) in a pregnant woman's blood. These substances come from the fetus and placenta and are found in the blood of all pregnant women. It is normal for the levels of these substances to vary among different women, but some women with particularly high or low values may be at increased risk for having a baby with certain birth defects.

The AFP+ test is called a "screening" test because it cannot tell for certain whether the fetus does or does not have a birth defect. It can identify women who have a greater than average risk for having a baby with certain birth defects. These women may then choose to have other tests (such as ultrasound or amniocentesis) that can help with greater certainty if a birth defect is present.

About 7 out of every 100 women who have AFP+ testing will need some further testing, but most of the time, these women will deliver a normal, healthy baby.

What birth defects can be detected by AFP+ Screening?

NEURAL TUBE DEFECTS (SPINA BIFIDA AND ANENCEPHALY)

Neural tube defects occur in only about one pregnancy out of every 1,000. They are birth defects in which the brain (anencephaly) or part of the spinal cord (spina bifida) does not form normally and may not be covered with skin or bone. Some babies with neural tube defects are stillborn or die shortly after birth. Children who survive usually have medical problems, some more severe than others. Complications may include infections, hydrocephalus ("water on the brain"), and sometimes learning problems or mental retardation. Spina bifida often results in paralysis of the legs and impaired bladder and bowel control. Elevated levels of AFP may indicate an increased risk for a fetus with a neural tube defect.

ABDOMINAL WALL DEFECTS

These birth defects are somewhat less common than neural tube defects. They are caused by an opening in the layer of muscle and skin near the "belly button." Although these defects can be serious, they can usually be corrected with surgery. Elevated levels of AFP may also indicate an increased risk for an abdominal wall defect.

DOWN SYNDROME

Down syndrome is a condition where the fetus has an extra 21st chromosome. Therefore, there are 47 chromosomes instead of the normal 46. The chromosomes contain the genetic material that determines our inherited characteristics. Down syndrome results in mental retardation and sometimes in physical problems such as heart defects. Although the risk of having a child with Down syndrome is higher in older women, it can also occur in young women. The AFP+ test is used to indicate whether a woman is at an increased risk for having a baby with Down syndrome. If the AFP+ test indicates that the chance for Down syndrome is high enough, further testing may be recommended.
Are you pregnant? But remember, most babies are healthly.

Problems can occur if the AFP test cannot detect.

What factors might influence the AFP+ test result?

If the AFP+ test is normal, this may indicate that there is no major problem with the baby's development. However, other factors can affect the test results, so it is important to discuss any concerns with your doctor or healthcare provider.

When should the AFP+ test be done?

The AFP+ test is best performed between 15-18 weeks of pregnancy, typically between the 16th and 18th week of gestation. This is because the AFP level in the mother's blood reaches its peak during this period and is therefore most accurate.

How is the AFP+ test performed?

The AFP+ test is performed by taking a blood sample from the mother. The AFP levels in the blood are measured, and the results are compared to a range of normal values.

What is the AFP+ test used for?

The AFP+ test is used to screen for certain birth defects, such as neural tube defects and Down syndrome. It is also used to screen for other conditions, such as spina bifida and anencephaly.

What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by the presence of an extra copy of chromosome 21. It affects 1 in 600 babies born in the United States each year. People with Down syndrome may have learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and heart defects.

How is Down syndrome diagnosed?

Down syndrome can be diagnosed before birth with tests such as amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling. After birth, it can be diagnosed with a blood test or physical examination.

What is amniocentesis?

Amniocentesis is a procedure in which a small sample of amniotic fluid is removed from the amniotic sac. The fluid contains cells from the developing baby's skin and other tissues, which can be analyzed to detect Down syndrome.

What are the risks of amniocentesis?

The risks of amniocentesis include bleeding, infection, and premature labor. However, these risks are low, and the benefits of diagnostic testing usually outweigh the risks.

What is the AFP+ test used for in prenatal screening?

The AFP+ test is used as part of a screening test for neural tube defects and other birth defects. It is usually combined with other tests, such as the quad test, to provide a more complete picture of the baby's health.

What is the quad test?

The quad test is a screening test that measures four different hormones in the mother's blood. It is used to screen for neural tube defects, Down syndrome, and other conditions.

What is the difference between the quad test and the AFP+ test?

The quad test measures four different hormones, while the AFP+ test measures only one hormone. The quad test is considered to be more sensitive and accurate than the AFP+ test.

If the AFP+ test indicates a possible problem, what should you do?

If the AFP+ test indicates a possible problem, you should discuss the results with your doctor. They may recommend additional testing, such as amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling, to confirm the diagnosis.

What are the false positive rates for the AFP+ test?

The false positive rate for the AFP+ test is around 20%. This means that 20% of women who do not have a problem will test positive. If your test comes back positive, you should discuss the results with your doctor to determine the next steps.

What are the false negative rates for the AFP+ test?

The false negative rate for the AFP+ test is around 10%. This means that 10% of women who do have a problem will test negative. If your test comes back negative, you should discuss the results with your doctor to determine the next steps.

What factors can affect the AFP+ test results?

Several factors can affect the AFP+ test results, including the stage of pregnancy, the mother's weight, and the presence of other health conditions.

If you have any questions about the AFP+ test, please ask your doctor or healthcare provider. They can provide you with more information and help you decide what is best for you and your baby.

More Questions?