

## AMNIOCENTESIS

### *Information and consent*

Amniocentesis is the **gold-standard prenatal diagnostic test** for chromosome problems because it is **direct from the fetus** (mainly it's skin cells which shed into the amniotic fluid). It is a relatively late test, ideally performed from 15 weeks on, so earlier tests are often preferred (CVS, Non-Invasive Prenatal Tests – NIPT, or first trimester screening depending on the situation).

#### ***Amniocentesis is the ideal test when:***

- *Detailed tests are required, eg extra chromosome detail or array studies*
- *Tests which represent the mainly placenta (CVS or NIPT) won't suffice, or need further interpretation.*
- *There are late findings, eg at the main 19-week anatomy ultrasound.*

#### ***Some reasons amniocentesis may be offered:***

1. **Advanced maternal age.** The chance of Down syndrome and other trisomies get higher as the mother gets older.
2. **Screening tests** indicate a high risk. These may include NIPT, ultrasound, blood tests or a combination of these.
3. A **previous pregnancy was affected** by chromosomal or genetic problems, or if there is a **family history** of these.
4. **Ultrasound findings or other pregnancy tests** suggest a chromosomal problem, a viral infection, or other specific problem.
5. **DNA** tests.

#### ***How is amniocentesis performed?***

An ultrasound is performed first. Then the skin is cleansed with antiseptic. A fine needle is then passed under ultrasound vision through the skin and down into the fluid which surrounds the baby, so that a sample of the fluid can be taken. The amount depends on the reason for the test and the gestational age. On average it is no more painful than a blood test, although the abdominal wall may feel sore afterwards.

#### ***After the test:***

You will need to sit quietly for a few minutes after the test, and have a restful day. If your blood group is Rhesus negative (1 in 5 women), a routine injection following the test will help avoid problems in future pregnancies.

