# First Trimester Screening

## What is the FTS?

The FTS is a screening test used to determine whether your baby has an increased risk of having certain disorders. It is called the first trimester screen because it is performed in the first trimester. It is a non-invasive tool that is used to ascertain if you are at high risk of having a baby with a chromosomal abnormality. It may identify syndromes such as, downs syndrome up to 85-90% of the time. It is your choice if you go ahead with this screening test. Not everybody chooses to have it done.

## How is it done?

The first trimester screen is a two part test:

1. A blood test from the mother: there are certain fetal proteins in the maternal serum which scientists have identified indicate a higher risk of abnormal chromosomes. These are called PAPP-A and alpha proteins. These markers get released by the placenta but show up in the maternal blood. This ideally gets done between 9-13 weeks gestation. This result then gets forwarded onto your selected ultrasound service provider.

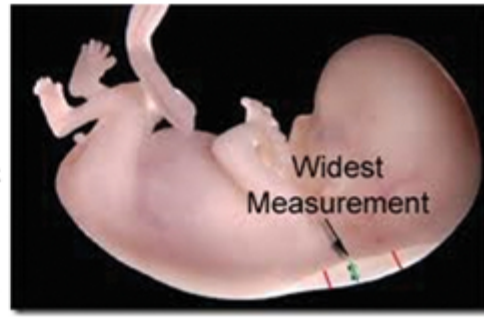
2. An ultrasound of your baby is the second part of the test. Specifically the nuchal fold, which is located at the back of the baby's neck, it is a fluid filled sack. Several studies have showed that a thickened nuchal fold puts your baby at an 'increased risk' of having chromosomal abnormalities and may need further investigation. This scan should be done between 11-14 weeks.

## What will it tell me?

These two results (maternal serum and nuchal fold) are then combined and will give a ratio, eg; 1:500. This indicates that this baby will have a 1 in 500 chance of having a chromosomal abnormality, and is classed at 'low risk'. Anything below 1:300 is classed as 'high risk'.

## What now?

If your result comes back at 1:300 or lower, it doesn't necessarily mean your baby has a chromosomal abnormality. It means your baby is at an increased risk and you need to discuss this with your care provider. Further testing may be offered. The next step would be an amniocentesis, this is a complex test and involves a 1:200 chance of miscarriage. Seek advice from your care provider.




**It is important to note, that the first trimester does not identify all abnormalities and it is only a screening test. If a high risk result is obtained further discussions with your health care provider should take place.**

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King Edward Memorial Hospital Guidelines
(WA) October 2012



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