

## PRENATAL TESTING

Most babies are born healthy. Most pregnant women will go through their pregnancy with few problems. About four in one hundred babies will be born with a major birth defect.

Some women do not want testing. Others choose to have testing during pregnancy to find out their risk of having a baby with a birth defect. It is your choice.

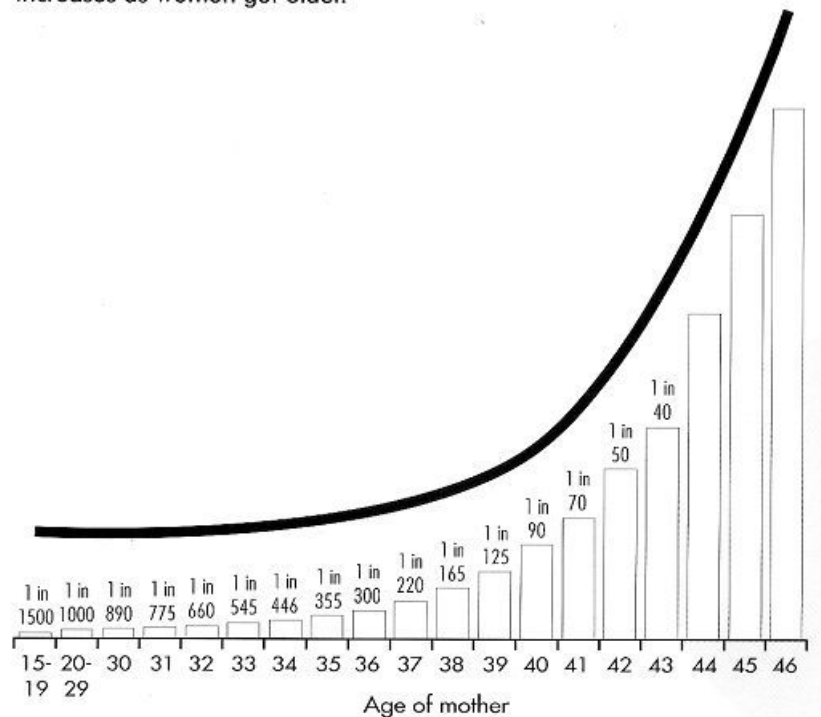
A blood test on the mother's blood called “**maternal serum screening**” is usually done at 15-16 weeks of pregnancy (free b-HCG, a-fetoprotein, unconjugated oestriol and inhibin A)

Age	Detection Rate	False positive
20	62%	4%
30	71%	8%
40	95%	34%

or sometimes it is done at 10-12 weeks of pregnancy (PAPP-A and b-HCG ) and combined with **1st trimester ultrasound**).

Maternal serum screening will indicate the risk of a woman having a baby affected with Down syndrome and other chromosomal problems or neural tube defects such as spina bifida.

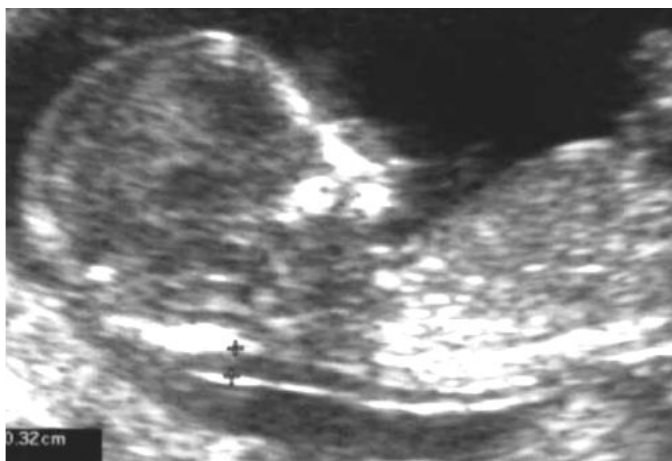
**Maternal Age:** As a woman gets older, her chances of having a child with Down syndrome increase. For example at 30 years of age the risk of having a child with Down syndrome is 1 in 890 births. At 40 years of age the risk is 1 in 90 births. The chart below shows how that risk increases as women get older.



## Ultrasound scans

Ultrasound scans involve the use of sound waves to create a picture of the baby. This is viewed on a television screen. Current knowledge suggests there is no harmful effect on the mother or the developing baby.

Ultrasound does not involve X-Rays



**1st trimester ultrasound** (nuchal translucency) done at 11-13\* weeks of pregnancy measures the skin thickness at the back of the baby's neck (nuchal translucency).

This measurement (when increased) can be an indicator of Down syndrome or other major disabilities in the baby.

(approx 70% reliability as an indicator alone)

The purpose of this scan is to assess the risk of a woman having a baby with Down syndrome or other chromosomal problems.

This scan is only available at specialist centres and is sometimes combined with the maternal serum screening blood test. (approx 90% reliability - combined test)

The **2nd trimester ultrasound** done at 18-20 weeks of pregnancy is to detect any structural abnormalities such as limb defects or other physical developmental problems in the baby. It does not detect all abnormalities. It does not diagnose Down syndrome. Women who have an increased risk of having a child with a chromosomal problem will then be offered further testing in the form of an **invasive test**, either chorionic villus sampling (CVS) or amniocentesis.