

Title: Pregnancy After Age 35

Author: Kara S. Roberts, MS4

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Abstract: Screening for possible aneuploidies, especially trisomy 21 or Down Syndrome, is generally offered to all women early in their pregnancy. The question is when that screening should be done to provide the most reliable and useful information. This article showed that combined serum (pregnancy associated plasma protein A and free beta subunit of human chorionic gonadotropin) and ultrasound testing (looking for nuchal translucency) early in their first trimester in addition to serum testing (quad screen) in their second trimester provided the most reliable results.

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Steps Toward a Healthy Pregnancy

- Be sure to get enough folic acid in your diet, starting as soon as you make the decision to try and get pregnant and continuing throughout your pregnancy
- Limit your caffeine consumption
- Avoid both alcohol and tobacco use; this includes staying away from second-hand smoke as well.
- Don't use any drugs, including over the counter drugs or herbal remedies without first talking to your doctor
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet including whole grains and vegetables.
- Do not eat undercooked meat or fish that is high in mercury; a list of these fish are available from your physician.
- Get tested for immunity to Rubella and chicken pox;



Pregnancy after Age 35

What you should know.



Kara S. Roberts, MS4
robe0545@umn.edu
Family Medicine Clerkship 2009

Increased Risks

- It may take you longer to get pregnant; your eggs may become less healthy as you get older; you may ovulate less frequently; it may be more difficult for your eggs to be fertilized
- Multiple pregnancies such as twins or triplets are more likely, especially when procedures such as in vitro fertilization are used
- You are more likely to develop gestational diabetes
- You may be more likely to have high blood pressure during your pregnancy.
- You may be more likely to require a C-section
- The risk of chromosomal abnormalities is higher, such as Down syndrome (see screening test section)
- There is a higher rate of miscarriage
- There is a higher risk of premature birth
- There is increased risk of stillbirth
- **Most women past age 35 will have normal, healthy pregnancies**

Important Screening Tests

Ultrasound - sound waves are used to create digital images of the growing baby; baby's beating heart can be seen; measuring the thickness of the back of baby's neck can be done. This is done early in pregnancy, usually during the first trimester

First Trimester Screen - a newer test done between 10-14 weeks that measures 2 different substances in the mom's blood, looking for possible birth defects; this is generally done along with a first trimester ultrasound

Quad Marker Screen - a blood test that measures substances in mom's blood that may be due to problems with the development of the baby's brain or spinal cord; this screen can also detect genetic problems such as Down Syndrome. This test is done between 15-20 weeks.

Amniocentesis - this is a procedure in which a small sample of fluid from around the baby is removed and can be tested for some birth defects. These include sickle cell disease, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, Tay-Sachs or Down Syndrome.

Chorionic Villus Sampling - this is a test where a sample of cells is taken from where the placenta attaches to the wall of the uterus; these cells can then be tested for many different birth defects, Genetic counseling is an important part of chorionic villus testing.

All pregnant women should see their doctor early and often during their pregnancy, so he or she can closely monitor you and your baby during your pregnancy.

See back of pamphlet for recommendations for a healthy pregnancy for you and your baby.

As previously stated . . .

- **Most women past age 35 will have a normal, healthy pregnancy.**

