

Alpha-Fetoprotein (AFP) Blood Test



What is Alpha-fetoprotein?

- AFP stands for Alpha-fetoprotein, a substance made by a developing baby before birth.
- AFP passes from your baby to the amniotic fluid (around the baby) and into your blood stream.

What does the AFP blood test indicate?

The AFP blood test helps to indicate risk of certain birth defects. The most common of these defects are spina bifida (open spine) and brain and skull defects. In Ohio, about 1 in 600 babies born has one of these problems.

How is the test done?

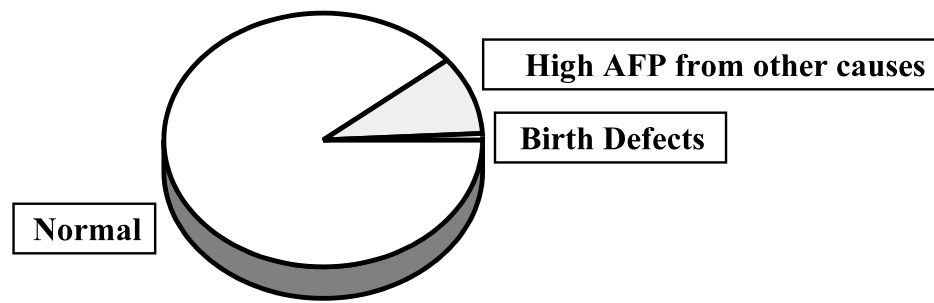
- A blood sample is taken from you between the 15th and 21st week of pregnancy.
- The lab will report the results to your doctor in one week.
- Waiting for these results can cause anxiety and worry. Please discuss your feelings with your health care provider, partner, and family.

What are abnormal results?

- If your blood value is too high, it **may** mean that:
 - ▶ You are at a different stage in your pregnancy than was thought
 - ▶ You are carrying more than one baby
 - ▶ You may have a baby with a birth defect
- If your blood value is too low, it **may** mean that:
 - ▶ You are at a different stage of your pregnancy than you thought
 - ▶ You may have a baby with Down Syndrome (a form of mental retardation)

What if the AFP is abnormal?

- If your AFP blood test is abnormal, there will be further testing.
- Tests may include:
 - ▶ A repeat of the AFP blood test
 - ▶ An ultrasound of the baby
 - ▶ Genetic counseling with a specially-trained counselor to review the results
 - ▶ Checking the fluid that surrounds your baby (amniocentesis).



More than 90% of babies born when there is an abnormal AFP test are born without birth defects.

If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.