

**North Texas Perinatal Associates**  
Genetics and Prenatal Diagnosis

---

**Amniocentesis Fact Sheet**

Every pregnancy has a baseline risk of approximately 4-5% that the fetus will have some type of birth defect and/or mental retardation that is not detectable prenatally.

There is a natural risk for miscarriage of 2-3% after sixteen weeks gestation. Amniocentesis presents an additional risk for miscarriage of approximately 0.5% or less.

Recommended precautions following amniocentesis are: Avoid lifting heavy objects. Do not engage in intercourse. Increase your fluid intake. Absolute bedrest is probably not necessary, but try to avoid strenuous activity the day of the procedure. Normal activity may generally be resumed the day following the procedure.

Some women may experience mild, intermittent cramping following amniocentesis. Many women may also pass a few spots of blood or a teaspoonful of amniotic fluid the day of the procedure, this is normal. However, if cramping persists and intensifies please notify North Texas Perinatal Associates. Should you experience heavy vaginal bleeding or are leaking large amounts of amniotic fluid, contact your physician immediately.

The sonogram done prior to your amniocentesis can be quite helpful in determining if certain structural defects are present in the fetus. However, it must be understood that sonography is not a clear photograph of the fetus and many birth defects cannot be detected.

On rare occasions no amniotic fluid or an inadequate amount is obtained when the amniocentesis is attempted and a repeat attempt is necessary.

The alpha-fetoprotein test run on your sample of amniotic fluid provides limited information about your baby's spinal cord, kidneys and gastro-intestinal tract. Alpha-fetoprotein testing is not specific to one particular birth defect. Therefore, if abnormal results are obtained, further testing and counseling may be needed. It is possible that an explanation for the abnormal result may never become apparent.

In rare instances, there is no cell growth in the amniotic fluid cultures and therefore, no information about the baby's chromosomes would be obtained.

The karyotype (chromosome analysis) is felt to be approximately 99% accurate in the detection of the most common chromosome abnormalities. An absolute guarantee cannot be given, however, as factors such as maternal cell contamination, and the rare possibility that you are carrying a fetus with a mosaic pattern of cell lines (more than one type of chromosome configuration in your baby's cells) can sometimes lead to ambiguous results. If the laboratory discovers an unusual chromosome pattern in your baby, it may be necessary to test the chromosomes of both parents in order to try and determine the significance of the finding in your baby. It is possible that the significance of the unusual test results may never be known.

**Thank you from the staff at North Texas Perinatal Associates!**