

North Texas Perinatal Associates
Genetics and Prenatal Diagnosis

Chorion Villus Sampling (CVS) 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 approximately 8-10% by the end of the first trimester. Chorion Villus Sampling presents an additional risk for miscarriage of approximately 0.5%.

Many women will experience mild cramping and sometimes light spotting following CVS. Should you experience intense cramping or heavy vaginal bleeding, or if you suspect you are leaking amniotic fluid, please contact NTPA or your physician immediately.

While activity restrictions may not be critical, recommended precautions for the three days following CVS are: (1) Attempt to rest frequently with your feet elevated. (2) Avoid standing for long periods of time. (3) Avoid lifting heavy objects. (4) Do not engage in sexual intercourse. (5) Do not participate in any strenuous exercise program.

The sonogram done prior to your CVS 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 that early in the pregnancy many birth defects cannot be detected.

Please note, it is possible that no chorionic villi are obtained when the CVS is attempted and a repeat attempt may be necessary.

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.

There are some limitations in the type of information that CVS can provide. Specifically, it is not possible to do alpha-fetoprotein testing through CVS. (Alpha-fetoprotein testing screens for defects such as spina bifida and other fetal disorders). However, sonography performed at 18-20 weeks can detect these problems, so the alpha-fetoprotein testing is no longer that important.

In rare instances, problems such as inadequate tissue for direct examination or no cell growth in the tissue culture may occur, and therefore, no information about the baby's chromosomes or biochemical status would be obtained.

Thank you from the staff at North Texas Perinatal Associates!