Screening Tests

Prenatal screening tests tell you the chance for the developing baby to have certain conditions. The California Prenatal Screening Program screens for:

- **Down Syndrome** (Trisomy 21)
- **Trisomy 18**
- **Open Neural Tube Defects** (openings in the spine or skull, like Spina Bifida)
- **Abdominal Wall Defects** (openings in the belly)

**Benefits of Screening**

Prenatal Screening can give you some reassurance about the pregnancy through a simple blood test. In the California Prenatal Screening Program, some women will have a “screen positive” test result. This result means an increased risk for a birth defect. For these women, the Program will cover follow-up services including genetic counseling and additional testing, if desired.

**Limitations of Screening**

Screening results are not 100% accurate. Some birth defects may be missed. Women with a positive screening result should not assume the baby is affected. They should consider further diagnostic testing.

**Types of Prenatal Screening in CA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California Prenatal Screen</th>
<th>Cell-Free DNA, aka NIPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blood Test(s), possible Ultrasound</td>
<td>Blood Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers some chromosome conditions and neural tube defects</td>
<td>Covers some chromosome conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program covers follow-up</td>
<td>Follow-up is independent of test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated screen: 90-95% sensitive for Down syndrome, varying by age</td>
<td>Very sensitive (95-99%) for Down syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best for women at low to average risk</td>
<td>Best for women at higher risk (e.g. over 35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Screening tests are good options for women who have average risk or who are not sure if they want to get a diagnostic test. Your doctor or a genetic counselor can help you see if a screening test is right for you.