Contraction Stress Testing

The contraction stress test is used by some caregivers as a means of making sure the *fetus* (baby) is all right, and that the fetus is well during and following contraction of the uterus. It actually measures the *uteroplacental function*. This means it is a test of how well the *uterus* (womb) and the *placenta* (the organ that transfers nourishment from the mother to the baby) work. Not all physicians are in agreement that this is a good test, and therefore it is not used by a number of caregivers.

METHOD OF TESTING

Previously this test was done using medications that stimulate the uterus to contract. A method now more commonly used is nipple stimulation. This involves having a woman rub her nipple through her clothing for two minutes, or until a contraction begins. If the first nipple stimulation did not produce three contractions in ten minutes, the patient is to begin again in five minutes. During this time the baby's heart rate is monitored.

RESULTS

When there are drops in the fetal heart rate during and following a contraction, it is thought that the fetus may be having some difficulties. The limitations of this test are that it produces a significant number of false positive results. This means that the test indicates problems with the pregnancy and that the fetus may be doing poorly, when, in fact, the fetus is doing well. Because of this the caregiver often performs the test hoping for a negative result (showing no problem), and pays less attention to a positive test (showing a problem) unless there are other problems which suggest a fetus is in trouble. Problems may point to a need to deliver the fetus earlier.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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