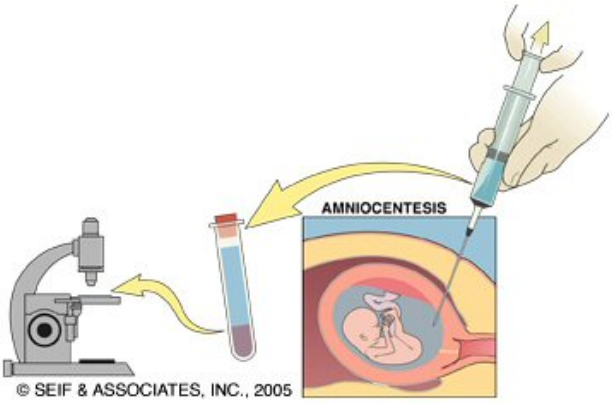
Amniocentesis

Amniocentesis is the removal of fluid from the amniotic sac. This is the sac of fluid that surrounds and protects the baby while it is in the womb (*uterus*). Once the fluid is removed, your caregiver can have the fluid studied. These studies help find problems the fetus may be having before delivery. The cells removed can be grown in tissue culture to determine if the baby has a genetic problem. The fluid may also be cultured and stained, to look for signs of infection in the uterus. Sometimes, this fluid is removed late in pregnancy to determine if the baby's lungs are mature enough for the baby to survive outside of the uterus. This information is important in pregnancies where the fetus must be delivered early. The fluid can also determine the sex of the baby.



BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

You should arrive 1 hour before your procedure, or as suggested by your caregiver. Check-in at the admissions desk to fill out necessary forms, if you are not preregistered. There will be consent forms to sign before the procedure. There is a waiting area for your family.

LET YOUR CAREGIVER KNOW ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

- Allergies.
- Medications taken, including herbs, eye drops, over-the-counter medications, and creams.
- Use of steroids (by mouth or creams).
- Previous problems with anesthetics or Novocaine.
- History of blood clots (*thrombophlebitis*).
- History of bleeding or blood problems.
- Previous surgery.
- Other health problems.

RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS

There is a one-half percent (0.5%) fetal loss (*death*) rate from complications, when done at 15 weeks of pregnancy or later. Amniocentesis should not be performed before 15 weeks of pregnancy. Removal of the amniotic fluid is often done using ultrasound guidance, to decrease risks. Complications include:

- Bleeding.
- Infection.
- Leaking of amniotic fluid.
- Premature labor.
- Fetal injury.
- Injury to the placenta.

This procedure is done only if your caregiver feels the information obtained from the procedure justifies the risk. If there is information about this procedure you do not understand, discuss this with your caregiver.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE

- You will rest for 1 to 2 hours for observation, at the place where the amniocentesis was done.
- The baby will be placed on a monitor for 1 to 2 hours for observation, to see if there are any problems.
- You should have someone available to take you home.

FINDING OUT THE RESULTS OF YOUR TEST

Not all test results are available during your visit. If your test results are not back during the visit, make an appointment with your caregiver to find out the results. Do not assume everything is normal if you have not heard from your caregiver or the medical facility. It is important for you to follow up on all of your test results.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Take any medication your caregiver gives you.
- Rest and eliminate all activities for that day.

- Eat your regular diet.
- Drink lots of fluids.
- Avoid sexual intercourse until your caregiver says it is OK.
- Do not do any lifting for the rest of the day.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop any vaginal bleeding.
- You develop leakage of fluid from the vagina.
- You develop pain in the belly (*abdomen*).
- You develop uterine contractions.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).
- You do not feel the baby moving.

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