

## *PREGNANCY*

Pregnancy is the period of time when a fetus develops inside a woman's uterus, and ends with the birth of an infant. The placenta, an organ that forms in the uterus during pregnancy, is the primary source of nourishment for the growing fetus. hCG is one of a number of distinct hormones produced by the placenta that are detectable in the pregnant woman's blood or urine. It is for that reason that hCG has become an early and convenient test for pregnancy. While generally reliable, the hCG can yield false positive results if an earlier miscarriage has gone unrecognized, certain types of masses are present in the uterus or the mother has used fertility drugs containing hCG.

A variety of additional clinical laboratory tests are available that can either diagnose existing problems or screen for potential problems. It is important not only to be aware of those tests that may impact the decision to have a child, but also to consult a health care professional even before becoming pregnant. Key preconception or pre-pregnancy tests include:

- Rubella
- HIV
- Hepatitis B screen
- Hemoglobin

In addition, ethnic genetic testing can screen for such important considerations as:

- Genetic hemoglobin disorders
- Cystic fibrosis
- Tay-Sachs, Gaucher or Canavan disease

During the first three months of pregnancy, ongoing testing helps evaluate the health and future medical needs of the mother. Such tests include:

- Sexually transmitted diseases (chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis)
- Blood type and antibody screen
- Urine screen for sugar and/or protein
- Bacterial vaginosis screen

Second trimester testing provides important insights into the health of the baby.

*For more information regarding the services provided by the Pathology Center,  
call (402) 354-4541 or (888) 432-8980.*

Test Direct is a program of the Methodist Hospital Pathology Center, an accredited member of the College of American Pathologists and the American Association of Blood Banks. The Methodist Hospital Pathology Center is also licensed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services under CLIA.

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