Prenatal testing can detect chromosome conditions in a baby before birth.

Microarray testing helps find more chromosome conditions than a standard chromosome study.

What is a chromosomal microarray?
Chromosomal microarray is a test that can find common chromosome conditions, like Down syndrome. This test can also diagnose uncommon and rare chromosome conditions that would not be found by a standard chromosome study. Microarray is able to detect very small missing or extra pieces of the chromosomes (called “micro”- deletions or duplications). These small changes in the chromosomes are not related to the age of the mother. It takes about two weeks to get the results.

What is a standard chromosome study?
A standard chromosome study is called a karyotype. A karyotype counts the number of chromosomes in each cell and examines the way each chromosome looks under a microscope. This type of testing accurately diagnoses common chromosome conditions, but it cannot detect very small deletions or duplications. It takes about two weeks to get the results.

What is the benefit of microarray?
The benefit of microarray is that it can find common and rare chromosome conditions that could cause problems in a child. Although microarray does not detect all chromosome conditions, it detects some conditions that cannot be found with a karyotype.

Are there any drawbacks to having microarray testing during pregnancy?
One drawback with microarray testing is that some results are unclear. Small changes in the chromosomes are seen in many pregnancies. However, it is not always possible to tell whether a small difference in the chromosomes will cause problems in a child. This can make it hard to know the best way to manage your pregnancy and may cause anxiety for expectant parents. Unclear results happen much more often with microarray testing. Ask your genetic counselor about the chance for an unclear result.

Another drawback is that a small number of chromosome conditions can only be diagnosed by a karyotype. These are very rare conditions that are not related to the mother’s age.

What chromosome testing will be done for my pregnancy?
Most samples from either CVS or amniocentesis will have microarray testing. It is rare for a karyotype to be needed when microarray is done. If you are concerned about getting an unclear result, you can request a karyotype instead of microarray testing. Unclear results are much less common with a karyotype.

Microarray can give you extra information about rare chromosome conditions, but there is a higher chance of getting unclear results.