

# PRENATAL ULTRASOUND FINDINGS

## Increased Nuchal Fold (2<sup>nd</sup> trimester)

### What is an increased (thick) nuchal fold?

The nuchal fold is a normal fold of skin at the back of a baby's neck. This can be measured between 15 to 20 weeks in pregnancy as part of a routine prenatal ultrasound. The nuchal fold is thick when it measures 6 mm or more.

This common ultrasound finding is seen in about 1 in 100 pregnancies (1%).

### Does a thick nuchal fold mean the baby has a problem?

Most babies with thick nuchal folds are healthy, especially when this is the only ultrasound finding. In a small number of pregnancies a thick nuchal fold is found in a baby with Down syndrome. Your baby is very unlikely to have Down syndrome if you have already had normal prenatal screening results.

### What follow-up tests are offered when the nuchal fold is thick?

The follow-up tests you are offered depends on which tests have already been done.

**Detailed (level 2) ultrasound** – A detailed ultrasound is done to look more closely at the baby's body and organs. You will be offered a detailed ultrasound if this has not been done in the pregnancy.

**Screening for chromosome conditions:** You may have already had a blood test that screens for common chromosome conditions. Either cell-free DNA (also called cfDNA or NIPT) or AFP4 (Quad) screening can estimate the chance for Down syndrome and trisomy 18. If you had normal results from a prenatal screening test, you may decide not to have any extra testing.

**Amniocentesis** – Amniocentesis can accurately diagnose Down syndrome and other chromosome conditions. You may choose this test if you want to know for sure about these type of conditions. There is a small risk for miscarriage from the procedure (about 1 in 1000 risk).

### What if follow-up tests are reassuring?

When follow-up tests are normal, most babies with a thickened nuchal fold grow and develop normally. You can continue with routine prenatal care.

### Where can I get more information?

You can speak with your OB provider or genetic counselor if you have questions about this ultrasound finding.

#### Kaiser Genetics Departments:

Fresno/Modesto	(559) 324-5330
Oakland	(510) 752-6298
Sacramento	(916) 614-4075
San Francisco	(415) 833-2998
San Jose	(408) 972-3300



*This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional.*

