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Prenatal Blood Tests

The importance of blood tests during pregnancy.

Good prenatal care can significantly improve a woman's outcome for her pregnancy. Prenatal care includes the use of a number of blood tests to detect the presence of infections or other potential problems in pregnancy. If a problem is found, treatment can reduce the risk of harm to pregnant women and their babies.

Routine blood testing for pregnant women will include:

** Blood type (A, B, AB, O) and Rh factor*

A person's Rh factor is either positive or negative. A pregnant woman who is Rh negative usually needs to receive a blood product called RhoGAM (anti-D immune globulin). RhoGAM prevents development of antibodies in the mother's body that can attack and damage the baby's red blood cells. This is called hemolytic disease, and can cause severe problems if it is not treated.

**German Measles (Rubella)*

German measles infection during pregnancy can cause severe birth defects, including deafness and severe mental defects. Although a woman cannot be vaccinated for rubella during the pregnancy, she can be advised to avoid exposure to German measles and can receive a vaccine following her delivery to prevent infection in future pregnancies.

**Complete Blood Count*

This tests the number and size of red and white blood cells and can identify problems such as anemia, infections, and bleeding abnormalities.

**Hepatitis B*

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that affects the liver. If a mother has Hepatitis B, there is a chance that the baby will become infected if the mother

does not receive proper treatment. The baby can be treated at birth and in almost all cases this prevents infection.

**Syphilis test*

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease. A blood test is the only way to absolutely determine if a person has Syphilis or not. Syphilis can severely affect a fetus or newborn baby, however, with treatment this is almost entirely preventable. In the past Syphilis was a major problem for newborns, however, with universal screening in many countries this problem has been almost entirely eliminated. In some regions law requires a pregnant woman to be tested for Syphilis.

**HIV test*

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. It is possible to have HIV for years and to not know it. Many women who have been found to have HIV did not know they were even at risk. If a woman has HIV, she has approximately a 30% chance of passing the virus to her child. If a woman knows she has HIV and is treated with special medication during her pregnancy and labor, she has a much smaller chance of passing the virus to her child. Some states require testing of your baby if you are not tested before he or she is born.