

There are pros and cons to both [cfDNA](#) screening and traditional screening, such as [first trimester screening](#), [second trimester screening](#), [sequential screening](#), and [ultrasound](#).

For some conditions, particularly [Down syndrome](#), [cfDNA](#) has been shown to be a more accurate screening test than traditional screening tests. [cfDNA](#) may also potentially screen for more chromosome conditions than traditional testing.

However, traditional screening can assess for conditions that would not be found with [cfDNA](#) screening, such as [open neural tube defects \(ONTDs\)](#). Traditional screening tests can also detect an increased risk for pregnancy complications, such as preeclampsia, preterm labor, and growth restriction.

[cfDNA](#) has the benefit of being able to be done sooner in pregnancy, often as early as 10 weeks. [cfDNA](#) is also able to test for sex as well as [sex chromosome differences](#) (more or fewer X or Y chromosomes than expected). Some labs offer screening for other genetic conditions, such as [microdeletion syndromes](#), for which there is limited available data.

It is important to discuss with your provider what your [cfDNA](#) test will screen for, and to come to a plan that is best for you and your family.

Both [cfDNA](#) and traditional screening tests have the possibility of a false positive or false negative result. A false positive result is when a test comes back high risk for a condition, such as [trisomy 18](#), but the pregnancy does not actually have [trisomy 18](#). On the other end, a false negative result is when a test comes back negative for a condition but the pregnancy actually has the condition.

Currently, [cfDNA](#) is not regulated by the FDA. It is also important to note that much of the information available regarding how reliable this test is comes from studies funded by the commercial labs and/or authored by individuals associated with one of the commercial labs.

Click [here](#) to learn more about scheduling a genetic counseling appointment for pregnancy-related questions.

Related Articles

- [cfDNA Testing: How Does it Work?](#)

Our DNA is inside nearly every cell of our body, and is the instruction manual for how everything in our body grows and functions. Our cells are continuously dividing to

create new cells. As cells break down, the DNA inside the cell is released into the blood as fragments or...

- [Conditions Screened for with Cell-Free DNA Tests](#)

cfDNA started as a screening test for Down syndrome, but over time the list of conditions that can be screened for is expanding. Most labs now provide screening for Down syndrome, trisomy 18, and trisomy 13, as well as the sex chromosomes (X and Y). Down syndrome, trisomy 18, and trisomy 13...

- [cfDNA Results](#)

Interpreting any prenatal genetic screening result can be challenging. Because of this, it may be helpful to meet with a specialist, such as a genetic counselor, who can review the specifics of your situation to help you understand what your cfDNA results mean for your pregnancy. It is important to...

- [cfDNA Testing: No-Call Results](#)

With cfDNA testing, there is a possibility to get a no-call result. A no-call result means that the lab was not able to run the test, or that the test did not produce a result. There are a few possible reasons that prenatal cfDNA screening may not provide a result....

- [cfDNA Testing: How to Decide](#)

The decision of whether or not to pursue prenatal genetic testing is up to you. Your doctor and genetic counselor are available to you with all of the information you need to make an informed decision that fits with your beliefs, values, needs, and personality. Your healthcare providers should also...