Fetal Fibronectin Test

The fetal fibronectin test looks for fetal fibronectin in the vagina. Fetal fibronectin is a “glue-like” substance that attaches the bag of waters (membranes) to the womb (uterus). It is normally present in the uterus between 22 to 34 weeks of pregnancy, but should not be found in the vagina.

If fetal fibronectin is leaking into the vagina, it means there has been a break in the membrane attachment. The cause of this break is unknown, but a positive fetal fibronectin test may warn of preterm labor in the next 7 to 14 days.

Who should have this test?

Women are between 22 to 34 weeks pregnant with signs of preterm labor may have the fetal fibronectin test.

How is the test done?

Your doctor will use a swab (like a Q-Tip) to get vaginal discharge during a pelvic exam. This test is not painful, but you may feel discomfort or pressure from the instrument inserted into the vagina (speculum). The test results will be either positive or negative for fetal fibronectin. The results will be given to your doctor within 24 hours.
What does a positive test mean?

A positive test result means that you might deliver your baby prematurely in the next 7 to 14 days. To prevent a preterm birth, your doctor may advise bed rest and lots of fluids for the next few weeks. You will be taught about symptoms of preterm labor and other measures to help to prevent preterm birth. You can read more information in the handout, Preterm Labor.

What does a negative test mean?

A negative test means there has been no break in the attachment of the membranes. It also means that the chance of a premature delivery in the next 2 weeks is very low. You should call your health care provider if you continue to have signs of preterm labor.

Early diagnosis and treatment of preterm labor may prevent a preterm birth.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.