Non-Stress Test in Pregnancy

A non-stress test (NST) checks the health of your baby by looking at your baby’s heartbeat and movement during pregnancy. The test may be used when:

- Your baby is not moving as much as usual.
- You are near the end of pregnancy or past your due date.
- Your pregnancy is high risk.

About the Test

NST is often given after 28 weeks of pregnancy when your baby is able to respond to the test.

- For a high risk pregnancy, the test may be given before 28 weeks.
- If admitted to the hospital during your pregnancy, the test may be given 1 to 2 times a day to check the health of your baby.
- There are no known risks or side effects to the baby or mother when having the test.

To Prepare

- The test will take 20 to 60 minutes.
- Please empty your bladder before the test starts and find a comfortable position to rest.
During the Test

- The test is done by placing two monitors over the mother’s abdomen:
  - One monitor, called **Toco**, records uterine activity. It records any contractions that you may be having. It will pick up the baby’s movement.
  - The second monitor, called **Ultrasound**, records your baby’s heartbeat. This monitor works like a microphone. If your baby moves out of range, the heartbeat may not be recorded by the microphone. If this happens, do not be alarmed, but please tell your nurse. The nurse will move the monitor until it is able to trace your baby’s heartbeat again.
- The nurse is looking to see that your baby’s heartbeat increases as he or she moves. Just as your heartbeat increases with movement, your baby’s heartbeat should also increase. The amount of change or increase in your baby’s heartbeat will depend on its gestation (age in weeks).
- If your baby is not active during the NST, you may be asked to move or the nurse will try to make your baby move using noise or touch. Your baby typically sleeps 20 minutes or more during every hour. The nurse may need to awaken him or her for the test.

Test Results

Test results will be shared with your health care provider, who will share the results with you.

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.