

Pros and cons of the Amniocentesis and Chorionic villus tests

James Walker, 9SRT

Amniocentesis test

The amniocentesis test is a diagnostic test carried out during pregnancy. It can assess whether a baby is likely to develop, or already has developed, a number of different severe medical conditions in the foetus stage.

Pros

- Can identify whether a foetus is likely to develop, or has developed, down syndrome, spina bifida or sickle cell anaemia
- Carried out before the baby is born, around 15-20 weeks into pregnancy

Cons

- Testing procedure is very invasive and requires a needle being inserted into the woman's abdomen
- Testing procedure has been associated with a 1 in 100 risk of causing a miscarriage

Chorionic villus test

Chorionic villus sampling, or CVS, is a test carried out during pregnancy to detect abnormalities in an unborn baby. CVS is similar to amniocentesis.

Pros

- Test described by users as uncomfortable rather than painful
- Carried out before the baby is born, around 10-13 weeks into pregnancy
- Can identify whether a foetus is likely to develop, or has developed, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, sickle cell anaemia and other genetic diseases

Cons

- Only offered in pregnancies where there is a high risk of a baby being born with a serious inherited medical condition
- Testing procedure is very invasive and consists of either a needle being inserted into the woman's abdomen or a tube being inserted through the cervix
- Can cause cramps, similar in intensity to menstrual cramps, for a few days after the testing procedure
- Testing procedure can lead to miscarriage or birth defects in the baby if carried out before week 10 of the pregnancy