For Your Information
From Premier Perinatal

Nuchal translucency screening, or NT screening, is an ultrasound test. It screens for Down syndrome (trisomy 21, meaning an extra copy of chromosome 21) and other disorders that are caused by extra copies of chromosomes (trisomy 13, trisomy 18), as well as congenital heart defects or a diaphragmatic hernia.

The NT scan is offered to all pregnant women in the first trimester. The screening is widely available, but because it requires special training and equipment, not all healthcare providers provide it.

Fetuses who have an extra chromosome may have more fluid at the base of their necks — a spot known as the nuchal fold — and this can make their necks larger. This fluid can be measured on a sonogram during weeks 11 to 14 when the base of the neck is still transparent. Timing is crucial, because the nuchal fold becomes less transparent as your baby grows. NT measurements are not conclusive, so the NT screening test can't tell you for sure whether your child has a chromosomal disorder, but it can be combined with other data (from blood tests and from population studies) to provide a statistic about the likelihood of such a disorder. This information can be helpful to parents who are trying to decide whether to have more invasive genetic tests, such as amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling.

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