

# Pregnancy and Prenatal Screening for Birth Defects

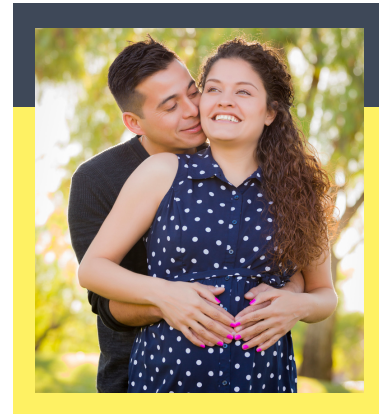
The **California Prenatal Screening Program** is a state program available to all pregnant individuals in California through their prenatal care provider. It uses a pregnant individual's blood samples to screen for certain birth defects in their fetus. The state program offers genetic counseling and other services to that person if the screening finds an increased chance of a birth defect in the fetus.

## Why is this state program important?

Birth defects are changes in a fetus that can cause physical and intellectual disabilities. Screening lets parents know the chances of their fetus having Down syndrome or certain other birth defects.

## Do you have to participate in this program?

**No.** This program offers prenatal screening to all pregnant individuals in Californians who want it. You decide if you want it or not. Screening also predicts the fetus sex.



## How much does this program cost you?

The cost to you depends on whether you have Medi-Cal or private health insurance or not. Medi-Cal and insurance must cover all program fees. For parents who find out through this program that their fetus has an increased chance of having a certain birth defect, the genetic counseling and other services are included in program fees. Patients without Medi-Cal or insurance will be directly billed. The fee is \$232 for first trimester screening, and \$85 for second trimester screening.

## What is prenatal screening?

Prenatal screening checks if a fetus has an increased chance of having one of a few birth defects that are screened for. Screening is a way to find those people in a large population who might benefit from genetic counseling, diagnostic testing, and other services.

## How is prenatal screening different from diagnostic testing?

Unlike screening, diagnostic testing may tell whether a fetus does have a birth defect, not just the chances of it. Chorionic villus sampling and amniocentesis are diagnostic tests. Ultrasounds may also provide information about certain birth defects.

## How has the California Prenatal Screening Program changed?

The state program was redesigned in September 2022 to offer the most up to date screening technology to all Californians. The program offers (1) cfDNA screening in the first trimester of pregnancy to screen for Down syndrome and other serious birth defects and (2) MSAFP screening in the second trimester of pregnancy to screen for neural tube defects. It is recommended that you get both screenings.

Please visit <https://go.cdph.ca.gov/MyScreening> to find out more.

