A non-stress test is done to monitor the baby’s heart rate. The test is usually done no earlier than your 7th month, or 28th week.

How is a non-stress test done?
- The provider caring for you will first get your weight, blood pressure and a urine sample. They will then help you get into a comfortable position in one of our exam chairs. There are pillows available to help position you more comfortably during the test.
- Two elastic belts will be placed around your tummy to help hold two flat round monitors against you. One monitor senses pressure in your tummy and can detect contractions. The other monitor listens for the baby’s heart rate. The readings from these monitors are recorded on a fetal monitor, which is watched by the medical staff.
- When you begin the test you will be given a button to push when you feel the baby move. We are looking at the activity of the baby and what the baby’s heart rate does when the baby moves.
- You will be monitored for at least 30 minutes.
- During this test, there are no monitors inserted into your body.

Why is this test done?
- Your provider may ask you to have the test done if he/she needs more information about how your baby is doing.
- Non-Stress Tests are done when you have diabetes during your pregnancy, other medical conditions, the baby has formed differently, the baby is not growing enough or you might be in labor.
- The test will show if your uterus (womb) and placenta are still supporting the baby and if the baby is being “stressed” or affected by what is happening during your pregnancy.
- The same machine is used when you are being monitored during labor and delivery or before a cesarean section.

How to prepare for the Non-Stress Test?
Unless given other instructions by your provider, please make sure you follow these instructions before the test:
- Eat a meal or protein / carbohydrate snack before coming to the appointment.
- Do not smoke before coming to the appointment – you should not smoke during your pregnancy, but if you have been unable to stop, please try not to smoke right before your test. Smoking affects the baby’s heart rate and activity, which can cause you to have a much longer test. If you are interested in stopping smoking, please ask your provider for more information.
- Sometimes this test can take an hour or longer – you may want to bring a book to read or something to do to pass the time. If you have support people with you, they may want to bring something to do.
- If you will be due for a blood sugar test or snack, please bring your supplies with you.
- Because of the length of the test, if you have other children, you may want to consider finding child care for them. You can bring them to the test but we find that it is helpful, quicker, and more relaxing for you if someone can come with you to care for them during the test.