WHAT IS A BIOPHYSICAL PROFILE (BPP)?

A Biophysical Profile (BPP) is a test that is done by looking at information from both an ultrasound (sonogram) and from a fetal monitor strip (a non-stress test).

Elements of the BPP

During the abdominal ultrasound, the provider doing the ultrasound is watching the baby’s movements and looking at the amniotic fluid.

- **Is the Baby making breathing movements?**
  This does not mean the baby can breathe on the outside. It means the baby is moving some of the muscles it will use to breathe when it is born. Think of this as the baby exercising or practicing.

- **Baby’s body movements**
  Is the baby moving a certain way, a certain number of times?

- **What is the baby’s tone?**
  Watching to see if the baby is able to keep a body part in a certain position.

- **Amniotic fluid (bag of water)**
  Measuring the amount of amniotic fluid (water) around the baby to make sure there is enough for baby to be comfortable.

- **Fetal Monitor Strip (NST or Non-Stress Test)**
  A different test that looks at the baby’s heart rate for a period of time.

How a biophysical profile done

Each of the above items are given a score of 0–2. The score is added up and this gives the provider an idea of how the baby is doing inside of the mother.

Why a biophysical profile done

Anytime your provider is worried about how the baby is doing, they may order this test. If the baby is forming differently, is growing too slowly or is being watched for a problem, this test may be done. If the mother has a medical condition like diabetes or high blood pressure, this test may be done to make sure the baby is doing okay. This test may give the provider a warning sign that the baby is not being supported by the placenta (how the baby gets oxygen and food while inside of the mother).

Preparing for the 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.
- 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 or snack, please bring your supplies with you.
- Because of the length of the test, if you have other children, you may want to find childcare 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.