



Finding Answers

If your pregnancy has ended in loss or your baby has died unexpectedly, your provider may ask you to consider further testing to help figure out the cause of your baby's death. The three most useful tests, in order of usefulness, are examination of placenta, autopsy and genetic studies. Talk to your physician about which tests are right for you.

Physical Examination of the baby: Physical examination, also called gross pathology, is a non-invasive testing method. A physician or pathologist simply inspects your baby for obvious physical abnormalities and symptoms of a genetic condition.

Maternal blood tests: Your physician may order maternal blood tests to detect for signs of conditions that might have contributed to your baby's death such as:

- viral or bacterial infections
- blood type incompatibility
- autoimmune disorders
- diabetes
- substances that can affect baby
- other maternal health conditions

Examination of the placenta and umbilical cord: The placenta is the primary organ for the development of the baby. It transports oxygen and nutrients through the umbilical cord to the baby. A pathologist will inspect the physical characteristics of the placenta and umbilical cord for areas of damage or poor blood flow. Research has shown that placental examination helps find a cause more than 60% of the time.

Genetic testing: Genetic testing such as karyotyping or microarray may supply added helpful information. It can detect chromosome abnormalities such as too few or too many chromosomes.

Autopsy: Your physician may ask if you would like to have an autopsy, or internal examination of the

organs. An autopsy usually takes approximately 4-6 weeks or longer.

- Partial autopsy - an option for families that do not want specific parts of the body disturbed.
- Full autopsy - looks at internal organs through surgical incisions. Organs are returned to the body and incision closed with stitches. May look at a sliver of tissue under a microscope.

Testing may not always supply answers, even if you do EVERY test; however, it may eliminate potential causes or supply information that is useful in subsequent pregnancies.

Keep in mind that your insurance company may not cover all testing options. Contact your healthcare provider for more information.



www.butterflykissesalliance.org

Email: ButterflyKissesAlliance@gmail.com

PO Box 907

St. Peters, MO 63376

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