

Prenatal Examination

Every mother hopes her baby will be born healthy. Prenatal examination is the best way to monitor a foetus's development and to detect problems early. Many early problems and congenital defects and diseases can be detected through prenatal examination, enabling early treatment.

Congenital abnormalities found in foetuses, include body structure defect (congenital heart disease, harelip), chromosome defect (Down's Syndrome), inherent gene (Thalassaemia Major) and virus infection.

Statistics show that three in every 100 foetus will have one or more of the abovementioned problems.

Older women, with hereditary defects, or who have abused drugs, or are diabetic are more likely to have abnormal foetuses. They need more prenatal examinations and greater care.

Doctors will normally perform a series of examinations on these high-risk expectant women. Non-invasive ultrasound tests can be carried out at different stages of their pregnancies, usually between the 11th and 32nd week of pregnancy to monitor more closely the foetus's growth.

Down's Syndrome is a congenital defect that can be detected through prenatal examination. About 100 babies are born with this defect in Hong Kong each year. Down's Syndrome cannot be prevented and is related to the age of the expectant mother. There is still no known cure for it.

Training, physical therapy, support from society and family can improve the quality of life of Down's Syndrome patients.