Explanation of Initial Lab Tests

At your first visit, the following blood and urine tests are performed on all obstetrical patients:

- The **CBC** measures your red blood cells (checking for anemia), white blood cells (checking for infection), and platelets (blood clotting cells).

- The **Hemoglobin Electrophoresis** tests for blood disorders caused by abnormal hemoglobin (the protein in your blood that carries oxygen). Some disorders can affect you and your baby, such as Sickle Cell, Hemoglobin C disease and Thalassemia. In some cases, your results might mean that we have to test your baby's father to see if you both have the same type of hemoglobin and whether our baby is therefore at risk for serious illness requiring special monitoring during and after pregnancy.

- **Blood typing** determines your blood group (A, B, AB, or O) and your Rh factor (positive or negative). If you are Rh negative, this is not abnormal, but an Rh negative mother who is carrying an Rh positive baby may develop harmful antibodies against the baby's red blood cells. The baby's blood type cannot be determined until delivery, so to prevent this; you may be given an injection of Rhogam, a long-acting immune globulin, which protects the baby for up to 12 weeks at a time. This is typically given at 28 weeks or sooner in the event of any vaginal bleeding or if an amniocentesis is performed. The baby's blood type will be tested at delivery, and if the baby is Rh positive, you will receive an additional dose of Rhogam to protect future pregnancies. If it turns out that the baby is Rh negative and the prenatal Rhogam was unnecessary, no harm was done.

- The **Antibody Screen** tests for the presence of any unusual antibodies in your bloodstream that could potentially have an impact on your pregnancy.

- The **Rubella** titre determines whether you are still immune to Rubella (German measles), from your own childhood vaccination. Rubella infection in pregnancy is rare, but can cause birth defects. The vaccine is made from a live virus, so if you are not immune, it cannot be given until after you deliver. Tell your doctor if you are not immune and think you may have been exposed.

- The **STI blood tests** screen for sexually transmitted infections including Syphilis, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV. The **STI urine test** checks for Gonorrhea and Chlamydia. In addition to affecting you, STI's can harm your baby and in some cases can be fatal. If you have an STI during pregnancy, it is important to find out, as there are treatments that decrease the chance of adverse effects to your baby. If you think you have been exposed to an STI at any point in your pregnancy, tell you doctor.

- The **TSH and Free T4** test your thyroid glands function and its effects on your metabolism. Many women have under or over active thyroid without being aware of it. If the results are abnormal, you will be referred to a specialist at Emerson Hospital for further evaluation. Undetected thyroid disorders can cause miscarriage or harm the baby including birth defects and abnormal brain development, but safe and effective treatment is available.

- **Urinalysis and Urine Culture** are done to screen for a urinary tract infection. UTI may be present in pregnancy without early symptoms, but left untreated, it can progress to kidney infection, which can trigger premature labor.

Additional Testing

Recommendations for additional testing are customized to your medical and family history, ethnic background, and social situation.

INFECTIOUS ILLNESSES

COMMON CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES - Most childhood viral infections do not pose any harm in pregnancy. Many adults are already immune to those that do. However, if you have regular contact with children who attend daycare or school, we will do a blood test to see if you are already immune to those infections that do pose a potential risk. If you are not immune, and do become infected during pregnancy, additional testing to monitor the baby's well-being will be necessary.

Parvovirus B-19 is more commonly known as **Fifth's Disease**. The symptoms may sometimes go unnoticed or may be mistaken for a cold. The risk of harm, primarily in the first half of the pregnancy, is so small that the Center for Disease Control does not recommend any special precautions.

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is another common childhood illness in the same family as chickenpox and mono. The symptoms resemble those of an ordinary respiratory virus, and it is generally harmless. If a woman is infected with CMV during her pregnancy, it can cause the baby to have mental, vision, and hearing deficits.

Varicella is the virus that causes **chickenpox**. Varicella infection in adulthood can be quite severe for the infected adult and can pose harm to the baby.

PARASITIC INFECTIONS

Toxoplasmosis is a parasite found in animals. It is estimated that 60 million people carry this parasite, often without symptoms. It is commonly associated with contact with cat feces, either during litter box cleaning or while gardening. It is also transmitted by eating undercooked, contaminated meat. Always wash your hands, cutting boards, surface areas, and utensils in hot soapy water following meat preparation, and always wash your hands before eating.