# WILL I HAVE A HEALTHY BABY?

## Genetic Counseling

*If you are pregnant or thinking about having a child, you may have questions about birth defects or other health problems.*

### *Anyone can have a child with a birth defect or genetic disorder.*

Some reasons are:

- Medical problems that run in families
- Genetic disorders which are more common in certain ethnic and racial groups, for example:
  - Northern European Whites — *cystic fibrosis*
  - Greeks, Italians, and Southeast Asians — *thalassemia*
  - African Americans — *sickle cell anemia*
  - Ashkenazi Jews — *Tay-Sachs disease*
- Drugs, alcohol or medicines used during pregnancy

*The cause of many birth defects is unknown.*

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### *Genetic counseling can help you:*

- Better understand your chances of giving birth to a child with a birth defect or genetic disorder
- Answer questions and discuss medical concerns about your "family tree"
- Understand your choices for finding and treating birth defects or health problems in your baby
- Get accurate, up-to-date information about genetic disorders, birth defects and available testing
- Plan for the care of a child born with a birth defect or other health problems

*The genetic counselor will respect your feelings and beliefs.*

## *Genetic counseling may be most helpful if:*

- You are a woman over 34 and are pregnant or want to become pregnant
- You are pregnant and tests show the baby may have a problem
- You have a family history of genetic disorders or birth defects, for example: Down syndrome, a bleeding disorder, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida, or muscular dystrophy
- You are worried that your medical condition may be passed on to your child
- You have had three or more miscarriages or cannot get pregnant
- You and your partner are first cousins or closely related
- You have used alcohol or drugs during your pregnancy
- You are taking medicines for a health condition and are pregnant or want to become pregnant
- You are concerned about being exposed to radiation or chemicals

*Genetic counseling is available to all who want it.*

Each clinic sets its own fees, but can help you if you cannot afford the counseling session. After the counseling, a review of what was discussed can be sent to you, your doctor or midwife, or other family members at you request.

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## *In the Pacific Northwest there are clinics for genetic counseling in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.*

*Anyone can call for more information or to make an appointment.*
*To find the clinic nearest to you call:*

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|---|---|
| **Alaska** | 907-269-3430 |
| **Idaho** | 208-334-2235 x261 |
| **Oregon** | 800-SAFE NET (800-723-3638) |
| **Washington** | 253-395-6741 |

***This fact sheet is available from:***

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Office of Health Promotion
P.O. Box 47833 Olympia, WA 98504-7833
(360) 236-3736

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