Amniocentesis information Sheet (AIS- 2008):

1) Although amniocentesis is considered to be over 99% accurate, absolute accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

2) An amniocentesis is only designed to check for certain conditions. A normal test cannot guarantee a healthy baby. The chance of any couple having a child with a serious birth defect is approximately 3%.

3) The risk of a serious complication causing a pregnancy loss due to amniocentesis is approximately 1 in 200. Serious complications include initiation of labour, spontaneous abortion or miscarriage, severe bleeding or infection. Minor complications such as vaginal spotting, cramping or leakage of amniotic fluid can also occur.

4) The fetal loss rate for any pregnancy from 15 weeks until term is approximately 2% if no amniocentesis is done. If an amniocentesis is done, the fetal loss rate is approximately 2.5%.

5) The risks of an amniocentesis in a twin or triplet pregnancy may be higher.

6) A repeat test may be required for a variety of reasons. The chance of this happening is less than 1%. Sometimes additional testing may be requested, such as a blood sample from the parents.

7) Follow-up counselling will be provided to discuss available options should an abnormality be found.

8) Maternal serum screening can be used to modify a woman’s chance of having a child with a chromosome anomaly. The advantage of maternal serum screening is that the test cannot cause any harm to the fetus. The disadvantage is that it is not as accurate as amniocentesis.