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Division of Women, Children & Sexual Health Services

How can I help to reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming into and after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

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Amniocentesis

Your appointment is on..... at
..... in the Fetal Medicine Clinic,
Claydon Wing Annex, Stoke Mandeville Hospital.
This can be found opposite the Claydon Wing
Maternity building.

Please allow at least one hour for this appointment.

Patient Information Leaflet

If you want to read this leaflet in another language
please call the Antenatal Screening Co-ordinators

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

What is amniocentesis?

It is a test to check whether the contents of any of your baby's cells are not normal. These are called "chromosomal abnormalities" and can mean that your baby for example will have Down syndrome.

Your baby's cells are in the fluid in your womb. Amniocentesis involves taking a small amount of the fluid for testing and an ultrasound scan is used during the test.

Why have it done?

So you will know for certain whether or not your baby has a chromosomal abnormality. The test does not however tell your doctor or Midwife about every possible problem.

When is amniocentesis a good idea?

It should be considered if you have:

- had a screening test which shows that your baby is at higher risk of Down syndrome
- had a scan and it shows the baby may have a structural problem
- had a previous pregnancy when a chromosome problem was found
- relatives who have a condition caused by a chromosome problem.

When is the test done?

The test is usually done when you are between 15 and 20 weeks' pregnant.

Are there any risks in having amniocentesis?

There are various risks:

- the test can cause a miscarriage. In every 100 to 200 tests the hospital does, we expect one woman to miscarry
- your amniotic fluid could leak and you could get an infection.

We always want to improve the quality of information we give patients. If you have any comments or suggestions about this booklet, please contact:

Head of Midwifery
Division of Women, Children & Sexual Health Services
Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
Stoke Mandeville Hospital
Mandeville Road
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire HP21 8AL

On rare occasions a test does not produce results. This may be because we get a sample but no cells grow. Also rarely we get a sample but the results are delayed because the cells only grow very slowly.

Coming for the test

Please bring your hand-held maternity notes with you. You may want your partner, a relative or friend to come to support you during the test.

The procedure

Your appointment will normally last 30 minutes.

You will first be asked to sign a consent form for the test to be performed. A member of staff will check your blood group. If you are rhesus negative you will be given an injection of anti-D after your amniocentesis. This will stop you from developing antibodies that may harm your baby.

You will then have an ultrasound scan to check how big your baby is and where it is in your womb. It will also find the fluid around your baby.

The next part of the procedure only takes a few minutes to perform. It can be uncomfortable but most women say there is little pain.

Your tummy will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution. A fine needle is then inserted through the wall of your tummy and into the womb to take a sample of the fluid that surrounds your baby. About 10-15ml (2 or 3 teaspoons) of the fluid will be taken. Ultrasound is used throughout the test to check your baby's well-being.

The sample is labelled and prepared for sending to the Churchill Hospital in Oxford for analysis. We will ask you if you wish to know the sex of your baby. The choice is yours. If you answer no, the people looking after you during your pregnancy also will not be told.

If you are being tested because of a structural abnormality, you and the father of the baby may also be asked to provide a blood sample.

We will explain to you when we will have the test results and we will check we have the right telephone number to ring you with them.

After the procedure

We will ask you to sit in the clinic waiting area for 15-20 minutes before going home. You should rest for the remainder of the day but can go back to your normal routine the next day. It is normal to experience mild period-like pain and you can take paracetamol tablets.

If you have any severe pain in your stomach, a raised temperature, watery fluid loss, heavy vaginal discharge or bleeding, please telephone the Labour Ward on 01296 316103 (Stoke Mandeville Hospital).

Your results

In some cases you should get the results two working days after your test. In other cases it could take 2-3 weeks.

If you had a Combined Screening or Quadruple test that showed you were at higher risk of an abnormality, the result will usually be available in 48 working hours. That means if you have the test on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, you should hear later in the same week. But if you have it on a Thursday or Friday you will have to wait until early the next week. The test will tell you if your baby has Down syndrome, Edwards or Patau syndromes.

If you had a test because of a structural abnormality, the result may take 2-3 weeks. This is because a quantitative PCR analysis and a microarray will need to be done. The microarray takes longer to do. It finds chromosomal imbalances which are too small to be seen by the usual chromosome tests. Please talk to the doctor performing the test to find out more details about what this means.

The Screening Co-ordinator will telephone you with the result. If the result is normal, we will update your notes at your next hospital visit and nothing more needs to be done.

If the results are not normal, we will ask you to make an urgent appointment. This will be to discuss the effects on the baby and what choices you have.

The hospital and community teams are there to support you through amniocentesis testing and after. There are also support groups such as:

Antenatal Results and Choices (ARC) www.arc-uk.org
Telephone 0845 0772290 or 0207 7137486

Further information

If you want more information please do not hesitate to contact the Antenatal Screening Co-ordinators on the numbers below. You can also visit the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists (RCOG) website for Patient Information Leaflets on Amniocentesis http://www.rcog.org.uk/resources/public/pdf/amniocentesis_patient_information_a.pdf

Please remember the decision to have this test must be yours

This leaflet explains some of the most common problems. But it does not cover everything. If you have other problems and want to ask anything else about your treatment please speak to the **Antenatal Screening Co-ordinators**.

Telephone:
01296 316269 (Stoke Mandeville Hospital)
01494 425230 (Wycombe Hospital)