

## Patient advice sheet

### My baby seems small

#### What does it mean if my baby seems small?

Small for gestational age refers to a baby that appears not to have reached the expected weight/growth for the number of weeks of your pregnancy. Smaller babies are usually quite healthy in pregnancy and at birth but may need extra monitoring.

#### How is my baby's growth monitored?

At each antenatal appointment from 24-28 weeks your midwife or doctor will assess the growth of your baby by measuring the distance in centimetres from the top of your uterus to your pubic bone (this is plotted on a customised growth chart).

#### Customised Growth Chart

This can be found attached to page 16 of your handheld notes and has been individually adjusted for you and your baby. The graph indicates the expected growth of your baby. More information about this is found on page 16 of your handheld notes.

If your baby is thought to be smaller than expected for the number of weeks of your pregnancy you will be referred to the Day Assessment Unit (DAU) and you will be offered an ultrasound scan (USS) within 72 hours.

#### What to expect when you visit the Day Assessment Unit

Please bring your handheld notes with you, allowing at least 1-2 hours for your appointment.

A full antenatal examination will be performed if there are any concerns raised by the ultrasound scan. This will include a detailed history of your pregnancy, any medical conditions, or any other concerns, including your baby's movements.

The midwife may listen to your baby's heart rate with either a Pinard (fetal stethoscope) or handheld Doppler (sonic aid). An electronic recording of your baby's heart rate and movements may be performed; this is called a cardiotocograph (CTG).

#### What will the ultrasound scan show?

An ultrasound scan will:

- Check your baby is growing well and estimate the weight of your baby (there can be 10-15% difference between the scan estimate and actual weight).
- Measure the amount of amniotic fluid around your baby.
- Measure the blood flow from the placenta to your baby through the cord.
- Measure the blood flow to your baby's brain.

All of these measurements enable us to make an assessment of your baby's growth and wellbeing.

If all of the above observations are found to be normal, you will be transferred back to the care of your Community Midwife or Doctor.

If there are any concerns about the growth or wellbeing of your baby you will be offered closer monitoring at the hospital throughout the remaining weeks of your pregnancy. Any proposed investigations or treatment will be discussed with you in detail, but if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either your Community Midwife or a Midwife from the DAU.

## Useful Contact Numbers

Antenatal Clinic 01296 316227 (Stoke Mandeville)  
Antenatal Clinic 01494 425575 (Wycombe)  
Day Assessment Unit 01296 316106 (Stoke Mandeville)

## Day Assessment Unit Opening Hours

Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm  
Saturday/Sunday 9.00am to 5.00pm

## References

De-Jong, C.L., Francis, A., Vangijn, H.P. & Gardosi, J. (1999) 'Fetal growth rate and adverse perinatal events'. *Ultrasound obstetrics and gynaecology*. 13 (2) pp. 86-89

Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists (RCOG) (2002) *Guideline 31: The investigations and management for SGA fetus*. London: RCOG Press.

NHS England (2019) *Saving Babies' Lives Version Two*. Available from: [Saving-Babies-Lives-Care-Bundle-Version-Two-Updated-Final-Version.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/saving-babies-lives-care-bundle-version-two-updated-final-version.pdf)

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up-to-date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

## How can you help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention and control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention and control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

## Patient Advice Sheet

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on 01296 831120 or email [bht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:bht.pals@nhs.net)

## Division of Women, Children & Sexual Health Services

### Approvals:

Maternity Guidelines Group: V2 Feb 09, V3 Oct 2012, V4 Nov 2015, V5 Mar 2019, V6 Jun 2022

O&G SDU: V2 Mar 09, V3 Sep 2011, V4 Dec 2015, V5 Jun 2019, V6 Jul 2022

Clinical Guidelines Subgroup: Not required

BMV: V2 Oct 08, V3 Aug 2011 (Chair's action), V4 Nov 2015, V5 Sep 2019, V6 May 2022

Equality Impact Assessment: V3 Oct 2012, V4 Nov 2015, V5 May 2019, V6 May 2022

PEG/CAP: V2 May 09, V4 Jan 2016, V5 Dec 2019, V6 Dec 2023