

**Maternity Day Assessment Unit
Hinchingbrooke Hospital**

The Nuchal Translucency Scan



Down's Syndrome

This leaflet provides you with information about one of the screening tests for Down's Syndrome (Trisomy 21), which is one of the commonest major chromosomal conditions. The risk of having a baby with Down's Syndrome is known to increase, as women get older.

It can also indicate two other Chromosomal conditions called Edward's Syndrome (Trisomy 18) and Patau's Syndrome (Trisomy 13)

Screening for Down's Syndrome

When you see your Midwife or General Practitioner (GP) for your booking visit, you will be provided with information about Down's Syndrome screening. Screening identifies whether you are at high or low risk of having a baby with Down's Syndrome, it does not tell you whether your baby is definitely affected.

To increase the detection rate, from 01.02.09 Hinchingbrooke Hospital began offering a Nuchal translucency scan and PAPPA and BHCG blood test instead; which is estimated to identify 85-90% of babies with Down's Syndrome.

The Nuchal Translucency (NT) Scan

The Nuchal Translucency scan is an ultrasound scan (just like a dating scan), which measures the thickness of the fluid space behind the baby's neck (called the Nuchal Translucency). This scan is carried out between 11 weeks + 0 days and 14 weeks + 1day of pregnancy. With the baby's CRL (Crown Rump length) measurements being between 45 and 84 MM

If the baby is older or bigger than these measurements screening can be undertaken by carrying out the Triple Test for Down's screening. This is also a blood test, which looked at different pregnancy hormones to identify the risk of having a Down's Syndrome baby. This test identifies over 80% of babies with Down's Syndrome

What is involved?

Your baby's size (CRL) will be checked. This will allow us to confirm your dates. We will then measure the Nuchal Translucency at the back of the baby's neck.

This scan also checks for other abnormalities. However, as the baby is still very small at this stage, some problems cannot be detected. For this reason, we always recommend that you have a further scan at 20 weeks.

Following the scan a blood test will be taken from you to detect pregnancy-based hormones **PAPPA** and **Free BHCG**. These will also indicate your risk

of having a baby with Down's Syndrome. The NT measurement will be combined with the blood test to increase the detection rate.

Getting the results

The scan can take up to 20 minutes and the result of the scan will be explained to you before you leave. You will be given a report for your maternity notes.

The blood results will be combined with the NT scan result; you will receive a letter within one week giving you your result.

What do the results mean?

A low risk result

In many cases, the NT measurement and blood tests will indicate a low risk, which means that your risk of having a baby with Down's Syndrome will be lower than your age related risk. If your result indicates a low risk for Down's Syndrome, you need do nothing more. Please be aware a low risk result does not guarantee that your baby does not have Down's Syndrome.

A high risk result

The NT measurement with the blood tests may indicate that you have a higher risk of having a baby with Down's Syndrome than your age related risk. The larger the measurement of the NT, the higher the risk. In order to find out if your baby is definitely affected you will be offered a diagnostic test: Chorion Villus Sampling (CVS) or Amniocentesis (amnio).

Many of the babies who are found to have an increased NT measurement will not have Down's Syndrome, but an increased NT may be an indicator of a range of other potential problems, such as: some chromosomal problems, heart abnormalities, genetic conditions, some rare infections or poor growth during the course of the pregnancy. Other follow up tests following CVS and Amnio would be discussed with you after the results of these tests.

Booking the scan

If you want to be screened for Down's Syndrome and want the combined NT scan and PAPP and BHCG blood test please state this when you arrive for your scan

It is important that you understand that you have the choice between having a dating scan alone and no additional screening.

If you are late for your scan appointment it may not be possible to perform the full NT scan and you will be offered a dating scan and the Triple test at 14 + weeks.

If the baby's position does not allow the measurement of the NT, you will be offered a dating scan and a Triple Test.

It is also important to understand that if you have a high body mass index (BMI) we may not be able to carry out the NT scan and again a dating scan and the Triple test will be offered to you.

Your scan appointment will be sent to you by post once your Community Midwife has sent you pregnancy details to the hospital.

**Scan line is open
Monday – Thursday 14.00 – 16.00**

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