

# Cystic Hygroma

An information guide



# Cystic Hygroma

## Introduction

You have been given this leaflet because your baby was found to have a cystic hygroma on a recent pregnancy scan. We hope this will help you to understand more about this condition, and what this means for your pregnancy.

## What is a cystic hygroma?

**A cystic hygroma** is a collection of fluid-filled sacs (cysts) that results from a blockage in the lymphatic system. It is most commonly located in the neck or head area, but can be located anywhere in the body. It is often discovered during early pregnancy, around the time of the dating scan between 11 to 14 weeks.

## What causes a cystic hygroma and can it be prevented?

The lymphatic system is a network of vessels within the body which form part of the immune system. They work in a similar way to blood vessels, but instead of carrying blood, they carry lymph fluid around the body.

A cystic hygroma forms when the lymph vessels fail to form correctly during the first few weeks of pregnancy. If this system isn't working properly the lymph fluid can accumulate (build up) – this is known as a cystic hygroma.

It cannot be prevented as it occurs so early in pregnancy. Nothing you did or did not do during pregnancy caused the cystic hygroma to develop.

## How common are cystic hygromas?

They occur in approximately one out of 800 pregnancies, and can affect both males and females of any ethnicity.

## What does this mean for my pregnancy?

In about 10% of cases there are no other obvious problems (such as unusual chromosomes) and the cystic hygroma resolves during pregnancy. In these cases the prognosis is good. Sometimes babies are born with a cystic hygroma, visible as a soft lump. Further treatment (usually removal of the cystic hygroma) is then offered after birth.

However, a cystic hygroma can also be an indicator of other problems with the development of the baby.

These include:

- **Chromosomal problems:** these are found in about 50% (half) of cases. The most common chromosome problems are Down's syndrome, Edward's syndrome, Patau's syndrome or Turner's syndrome.
- **Genetic syndromes:** these are found in about 40% of cases. The most common problem is Noonan's syndrome.
- **Cardiac (heart) problems:** found in approximately 40 to 50% of cases.
- **Hydrops:** this is a condition that occurs when large amounts of fluid build-up in a baby's tissues and organs causing extreme swelling. Hydrops can put additional pressure on the baby's heart. This occurs in about 60 to 80% of cases of cystic hygroma.

Because of the link between cystic hygroma and these problems, there is unfortunately an increased chance of miscarriage.

## **What happens now?**

You will be referred to the Pennine Fetal Unit (PFU), and offered a detailed scan with one of the fetal medicine consultants. The PFU midwives will be in touch with you by telephone to arrange this appointment.

The PFU team will offer and explain any further tests that can be used to help identify the underlying cause of the cystic hygroma, including tests to check the baby's chromosomes.

## **Contact details**

We understand that this can be a worrying time for you, your partner and your family.

If you have any questions, or need any support please call the Pennine Fetal Unit on the details below.

Telephone: 0161 778 5183

9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

## **Acknowledgements**

Great Ormond Street NHS Foundation Trust

Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

## **References**

Great Ormond Street NHS Foundation Trust

[https://www.google.com/url?](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiNtrOo_MXsAhVEtHEKHf21Cf4QFjACegQIAhAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gosh.nhs.uk%2Ffile%2F734%2Fdownload&usg=AOvVaw3KJwCI3c25mL9J2ynVaj17)

[sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiNtrOo\\_MXsAhVEtHEKHf21Cf4QFjACegQIAhAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gosh.nhs.uk%2Ffile%2F734%2Fdownload&usg=AOvVaw3KJwCI3c25mL9J2ynVaj17](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiNtrOo_MXsAhVEtHEKHf21Cf4QFjACegQIAhAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gosh.nhs.uk%2Ffile%2F734%2Fdownload&usg=AOvVaw3KJwCI3c25mL9J2ynVaj17)

Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[https://www.networks.nhs.uk/nhs-networks/staffordshire-shropshire-and-black-country-newborn/documents/Cystic\\_Hygroma.pdf](https://www.networks.nhs.uk/nhs-networks/staffordshire-shropshire-and-black-country-newborn/documents/Cystic_Hygroma.pdf)

## **Genetic & Rare Diseases Information Centre (GARD)**

<https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/diseases/6234/cystic-hygroma>

## **Fetal Medicine Foundation**

<https://fetalmedicine.org/education/fetal-abnormalities/neck/cystic-hygroma>

**Notes:**



**If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service**

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

اگر انگریزی آپ کی پہلی زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو ، براہ کرم ترجمانی اور ترجمہ خدمت سے رابطہ کریں

Dacă engleza nu este prima ta limbă și ai nevoie de ajutor, te rugăm să contactezi Serviciul de interpretare și traducere

ইংরাজী যদি আপনার প্রথম ভাষা না হয় এবং আপনার সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন হয় তবে অনুগ্রহ করে দোভাষী এবং অনুবাদ পরিষেবাটিতে যোগাযোগ করুন

إذا لم تكن الإنجليزية هي لغتك الأولى وتحتاج إلى مساعدة ، فيرجى الاتصال بخدمة الترجمة الشفوية والتحريرية

☎ : 0161 627 8770

@ : interpretation@pat.nhs.uk

To improve our care environment for Patients, Visitors and Staff, **Northern Care Alliance NHS Group** is Smoke Free including buildings, grounds & car parks.

For advice on stopping smoking contact the Specialist Stop Smoking Service on 01706 517 522

**For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897**


**For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 624 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service**

The Northern Care Alliance NHS Group (NCA) is one of the largest NHS organisations in the country, employing 17,000 staff and providing a range of hospital and community healthcare services to around 1 million people across Salford, Oldham, Bury, Rochdale and surrounding areas. Our Care Organisations are responsible for providing our services, delivering safe, high quality and reliable care to the local communities they serve.

The NCA brings together Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust and the hospitals and community services of The Royal Oldham Hospital, Fairfield General Hospital in Bury, and Rochdale Infirmary (currently part of The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust).

 [www.facebook.com/NorthernCareAllianceNHSGroup](http://www.facebook.com/NorthernCareAllianceNHSGroup)

 [www.linkedin.com/company/northern-care-alliance-nhs-group](http://www.linkedin.com/company/northern-care-alliance-nhs-group)

 Northern Care Alliance NHS Group (NCA) @NCAlliance\_NHS

**Date of publication: June 2021**

**Date of review: JUnE 2021**

**Date of next review: June 2023**

**Ref: PI(WC)1116**

© The Northern Care Alliance NHS Group



[www.pat.nhs.uk](http://www.pat.nhs.uk)

[www.northerncarealliance.nhs.uk](http://www.northerncarealliance.nhs.uk)