

# Isolated Echogenic Bowel on Antenatal Ultrasound - What this means

An information guide



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## What is Echogenic Bowel?

An ultrasound scan of your baby has shown that your baby has echogenic bowel. 'Echogenic bowel' is the term used to describe the appearance of the baby's bowel. It means that it appears brighter than usual.

## What does this mean?

In most cases the cause is never found and it often disappears. Causes associated with echogenic or bright bowels are:

- Early bleed in pregnancy - This is one of the most common reasons for echogenic bowel. It may be caused by the baby swallowing some blood in the amniotic fluid. This is not harmful to the baby.
- Infections: Some viral infections can cause echogenic bowel. These include cytomegalovirus (CMV), toxoplasmosis and parvovirus. These often cause only mild symptoms in adults, but may result in inflammation of the baby's bowel which shows as bright areas on scan. We will offer to take your blood and test to see if you have recently had any infections. Around 1- 3% of cases of echogenic bowel are found to have been caused by an infection like this.
- Chromosomal problems such as Down's syndrome. We will offer further diagnostic testing which will be able to tell you if your baby has an expected set of chromosomes. Around 1 to 3% of babies with echogenic bowel are found to have a chromosomal problem.
- Cystic fibrosis: This is an inherited disease which affects the lungs and digestion. It affects both boys and girls equally and means that they will need to have lifelong treatment. We will

offer to take blood from both parents to check if either of you are a carrier of the cystic fibrosis gene.

Around 3% of babies who have echogenic bowel at the anomaly scan are found to have cystic fibrosis and 97% do not. All newborn babies in the UK are screened for CF as part of the Newborn Bloodspot Screening.

### **What happens next?**

You will be referred to the Pennine Fetal Unit (PFU). The PFU team will review your scan findings and are likely to offer you an additional scan to confirm these findings. The PFU midwives will be in touch with you by telephone to arrange an appointment.

The team will explore with you if the echogenic bowel is still present at this appointment, in addition to any other details on the scan and any relevant tests that can be offered to help identify the underlying cause of the echogenic bowel.

Based on any further tests and scan results, the team will decide if a follow up scan later in pregnancy is necessary. The PFU team will be in telephone contact with you.

### **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 - Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm

### **Further information**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fetal-anomaly-screening-20-week-scan/fetal-anomaly-screening-20-week-scan>

Information from Public Health England about the fetal anomaly scan, including helpful leaflets and advice.

### **Acknowledgements**

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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

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