Nuchal translucency (NT) of 3.5mm or more on Ultrasound Scan

An information guide
Nuchal translucency (NT) of 3.5mm or more on Ultrasound Scan - Information for parents

You have been given this information sheet because the Nuchal Translucency (NT) of your baby has been found to be 3.5mm or more.

A raised NT does not mean there is definitely a problem.

What is Nuchal Translucency?

Nuchal translucency (NT) is the appearance on a scan, of a collection of fluid under the skin behind the baby’s neck. This fluid is part of baby’s normal development in the womb in early pregnancy. However, if your baby has more fluid than usual, it can be an indication of a possible health problem.
Implications of Raised NT

Studies have shown that an increased NT is associated with:

- Trisomy 21 (Down’s Syndrome), and other chromosomal conditions (such as Trisomy 18 (Edward’s syndrome) or trisomy 13 (Patau Syndrome).
- Genetic syndromes
- Congenital heart abnormalities
- Increased risk of miscarriage.

Increased NT is associated with a group of conditions and there may not be a single cause for the fluid increase.

Exclusion of problems in baby is a staged process.

However, it is important to remember that many babies with increased NT at an early scan can be born healthy and well.

Why do you measure NT?

All pregnant women in England are offered a screening test to give them information on the chance of their baby having Down’s, Edward’s and Patau syndrome. We measure NT as part of the ‘combined’ screening test for all three of these syndromes.

You may have chosen not to have baby screened for Down’s syndrome. However, because a raised NT is also linked with physical problems and other conditions, the sonographer will tell you if the NT measures 3.5mm or more.
What happens now I know that my baby has a raised NT?

At your appointment with a health professional, you will be counselled regarding your options. This will include the offer of diagnostic invasive testing: either a chorionic villus sampling (before 14 weeks) performed at St Mary’s Hospital or amniocentesis (after 15 weeks) performed at Royal Oldham hospital.

Both these tests will give you a diagnosis (tell you for sure) if baby has a chromosomal abnormality or not.

**Chorionic villus sampling (CVS)** - This is a diagnostic test usually carried out between the 11th and 14th weeks of pregnancy. It involves passing a needle with ultrasound (scan) guidance through your lower abdomen (tummy) into the placenta and some cells are taken. This test is available at St Mary’s Hospital, in Manchester.

**Amniocentesis** - This is usually carried out from the 15th week of pregnancy, where in a similar way to CVS, a small sample of amniotic fluid (the fluid that surrounds the baby in the womb) is taken for testing by passing a fine needle though your abdomen. This test is available at Royal Oldham Hospital.

There are risks associated with both procedures, including miscarriage (1%). Please see the amniocentesis and CVS leaflets for more information.

Although this can be worrying, it is important to remember that an increased NT does not always mean there is always a health problem.
It will be up to you whether or not to have any more tests. If the tests show there is a problem with your baby, you will be supported to make the choice that is right for you and your family.

A referral will be made to the Pennine Fetal Unit (PFU). You will receive a phone call from PFU at Royal Oldham Hospital who will discuss the timing of your next appointment.

**Further appointments**

You will be offered appointments for further scans with a consultant in PFU regardless of your decision to have the CVS or amniocentesis.

- 16 weeks - This is to perform an early anomaly scan as this can detect some of the associated structural problems at an earlier stage and may help you in planning the pregnancy.
- 20 weeks - For a detailed scan of the baby’s heart at 20 weeks.
Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions while you are waiting for your appointment, please visit the following websites or call the number below:

**NHS Choices**

www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/screening-amniocentesis-downs-syndrome/

**Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists**


**ARC – Antenatal results and choices**

www.arc-uk.org

**Pennine Fetal Unit Midwives**

0161-7785183

At a time like this it is natural to want as much information as possible. Many people choose to look at information on the internet, but please remember that some websites contain information that is not accurate.
If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Ethnic Health Team on 0161 627 8770

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

Date of publication: June 2018
Date of review: June 2018
Date of next review: June 2020
Ref: PI(WC)1085
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