



healthwatch

INFORMATION GUIDE

**Free Screenings
for Pregnant
Women Available
in the UK**

In this guide you will find:

- Information on free screenings available to pregnant women in UK. These include:
 - Screening for Infectious Diseases
 - Screening for Down's syndrome, Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome
 - Screening for Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia
 - Screening for Physical Abnormalities (mid-pregnancy scan or 20 Week Scan)
- Information on what each of these screenings involve
- Support Available for pregnant women and mums



Screening for Infectious Diseases

Screening for Infectious Diseases

During your pregnancy, you'll be offered a blood test for 3 infectious diseases: hepatitis B, HIV and syphilis (they can all be passed from mother to baby during pregnancy). This is part of routine antenatal screening and is offered, and recommended, for all pregnant women in England in every pregnancy. You will usually be offered the blood test at your booking appointment with a midwife. The blood test needs to be done as early as possible in pregnancy, ideally by 10 weeks.

If you already know you have HIV or hepatitis B, you'll need early specialist appointments to plan your care in pregnancy. If your partner has HIV, hepatitis B or syphilis, tell your midwife as soon as possible.

It's your choice to be tested for any or all of these infections. The tests are recommended to:

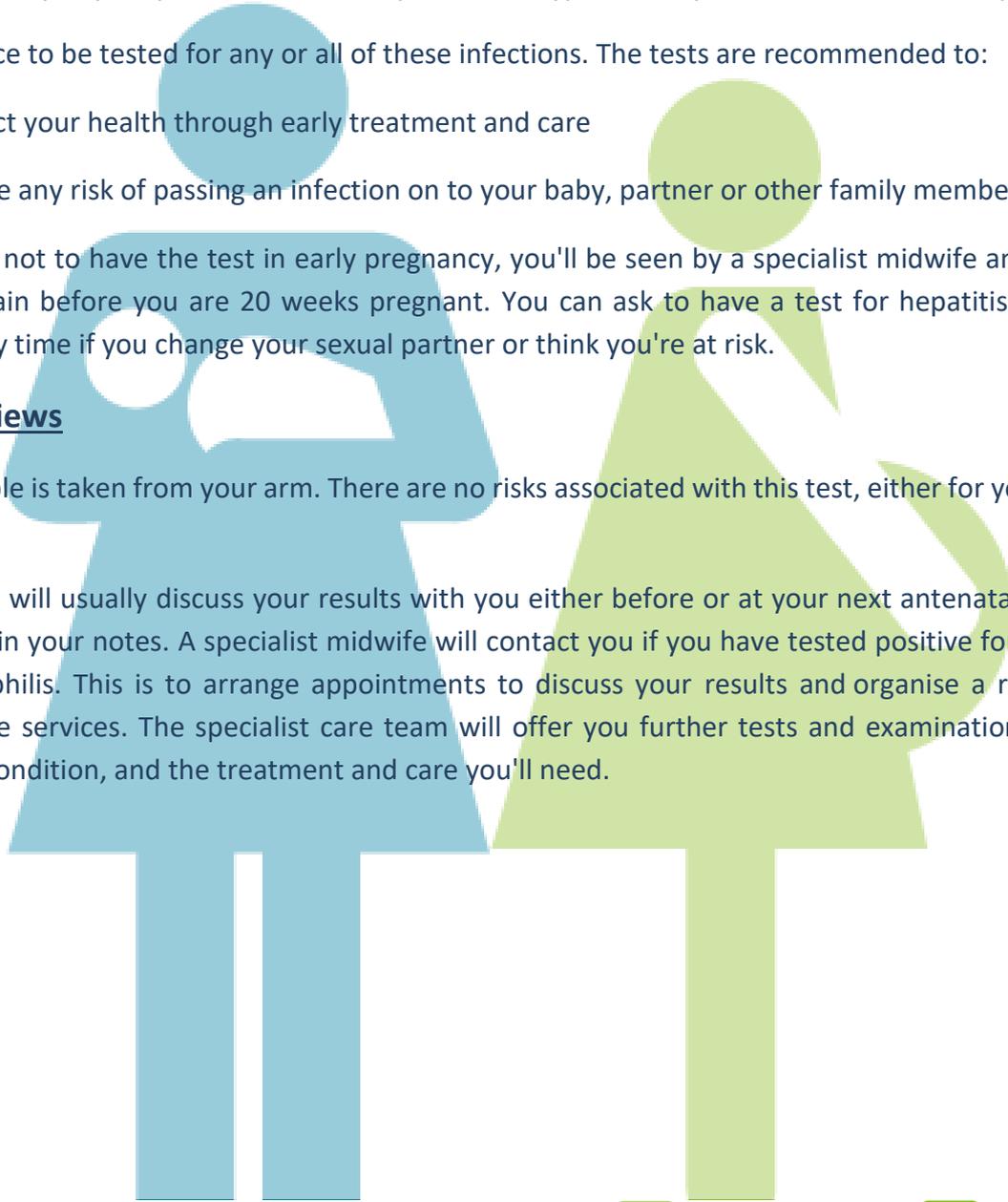
- protect your health through early treatment and care
- reduce any risk of passing an infection on to your baby, partner or other family members

If you decide not to have the test in early pregnancy, you'll be seen by a specialist midwife and offered screening again before you are 20 weeks pregnant. You can ask to have a test for hepatitis B, HIV or syphilis at any time if you change your sexual partner or think you're at risk.

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A blood sample is taken from your arm. There are no risks associated with this test, either for you or your baby.

Your midwife will usually discuss your results with you either before or at your next antenatal visit and record them in your notes. A specialist midwife will contact you if you have tested positive for hepatitis B, HIV or syphilis. This is to arrange appointments to discuss your results and organise a referral for specialist care services. The specialist care team will offer you further tests and examinations to fully assess your condition, and the treatment and care you'll need.





Screening for Down's Syndrome, Edwards' Syndrome and Patau's Syndrome

Screening for Down's syndrome, Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome

All pregnant women in England are offered a screening test for Down's syndrome, Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome between 10 and 14 weeks of pregnancy. This is to assess your chances of having a baby with these conditions.

If a screening test shows that you have a higher chance of having a baby with Down's syndrome, Edwards' syndrome or Patau's syndrome, you'll be offered diagnostic tests to find out for certain if your baby has the condition.

Down's Syndrome

Down's syndrome causes some level of learning disability. It can vary from mild to severe. People with Down's syndrome may be more likely to have other health conditions, such as heart conditions, and problems with the digestive system, hearing and vision. Sometimes these can be serious, but many can be treated.

Edwards' and Patau's Syndromes

Sadly, most babies with Edwards' syndrome or Patau's syndrome will die before or shortly after birth. Some babies may survive to adulthood, but this is rare. All babies born with Edwards' syndrome or Patau's syndrome will have a wide range of problems, which are usually very serious. These may include major complications affecting their brain.

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Combined Test – This is called the combined test because it combines an ultrasound scan and a blood test. The scan can be carried out at the same time as the pregnancy dating scan. If you choose to have the test, you will have a blood sample taken. At the scan, the fluid at the back of the baby's neck is measured to determine the "nuchal translucency". Your age and the information from these 2 tests is used to work out the chance of the baby having Down's syndrome, Edwards' syndrome or Patau's syndrome.

Quadruple Blood Screening Test - If it was not possible to obtain a nuchal translucency measurement, or you're more than 14 weeks into your pregnancy, you'll be offered a test called the quadruple blood screening test between 14 and 20 weeks of pregnancy. This only screens for Down's syndrome and is not quite as accurate as the combined test.

Mid-Pregnancy Scan- For Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome, if you are too far into your pregnancy to have the combined test, you'll be offered this scan. It looks for physical conditions, including Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome.



Screening for Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia

Screening for Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia

Sickle cell disease and thalassaemia are inherited blood disorders. If you're a carrier of the sickle cell or thalassaemia gene, you can pass these health conditions on to your baby. All pregnant women in England are offered a blood test to find out if they carry a gene for thalassaemia. Those at high risk of being a sickle cell carrier are offered a test for sickle cell. If the mother is found to be a carrier, screening is also offered to the father. This test should be offered before you're 10 weeks pregnant.

Sickle cell disease and thalassaemia affect haemoglobin, a part of the blood that carries oxygen around the body.

People with sickle cell:

- can have episodes of very severe pain
- can get serious life-threatening infections
- are usually anaemic (their bodies have difficulty carrying oxygen)

Babies with sickle cell disease can receive early treatment, including vaccinations and antibiotics.

Thalassaemia - People with thalassaemia are very anaemic and need a blood transfusion every 2 to 5 weeks, as well as injections and medicines throughout their lives.

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The screening involves a blood test. It's best to have the test before you're 10 weeks pregnant. This is because you'll have the option of more tests to find out whether your baby will be affected if this first test shows you're a carrier of a blood disorder. By having the test early, you and your partner can find out about all your options and make an informed decision if your baby is at risk of inheriting a blood disorder.

All pregnant women are offered a test for thalassaemia, but not all women are automatically offered a test for sickle cell. In areas where haemoglobin diseases are more common, all women will automatically be offered a blood test for sickle cell. In areas where haemoglobin diseases are less common, a questionnaire is used to identify your family origins and the origins of the baby's father. If the questionnaire shows that you or the baby's father are at risk of being a sickle cell carrier, you will be offered a test.

You can ask to have the test even if your family origins do not suggest the baby would be at high risk of a haemoglobin disease. The test cannot harm you or your baby, but it's important to think carefully about whether or not to have this test.

You'll get the result of the blood test within a week.



Screening for Physical Abnormalities

Screening for Physical Abnormalities (mid-pregnancy scan or 20 Week Scan)

This ultrasound scan, sometimes called the mid-pregnancy or anomaly scan, is usually carried out when you're between 18 and 21 weeks pregnant. The 20-week scan is offered to everybody, but you do not have to have it if you do not want to. The scan checks the physical development of your baby, although it cannot pick up every condition.

The scan looks in detail at the baby's bones, heart, brain spinal cord, face, kidneys and abdomen. It allows the person doing the scan, to look for 11 rare conditions. These conditions include:

- anencephaly
- open spina bifida
- cleft lip
- diaphragmatic hernia
- gastroschisis
- exomphalos
- serious cardiac abnormalities
- bilateral renal agenesis
- lethal skeletal dysplasia
- Edwards' syndrome, or T18
- Patau's syndrome, or T13

Some conditions can be seen more clearly than others.

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You'll be asked to lie on a couch, lower your skirt or trousers to your hips and lift your top to your chest so your abdomen is uncovered. The sonographer or their assistant will tuck tissue paper around your clothing to protect it from the gel, which will be put on your tummy. The sonographer then passes a handheld probe over your skin to examine the baby's body. The gel makes sure there's good contact between the probe and your skin. A black and white image of the baby will appear on the ultrasound screen.

The scan does not hurt, but the sonographer may need to apply slight pressure to get the best views of the baby. This might be uncomfortable. The appointment for the 20-week scan usually takes around 30 minutes.

You may need to have a full bladder when you come for the appointment. The doctor or midwife looking after you will let you know before you come. If you're not sure, you can contact them and ask.

The sonographer will be able to tell you the results of the scan at the time.

Support Available:

General Support for Pregnant Women:

HEY Baby Hull (Antenatal Classes): 07769671449

Community Midwives Clerical Team: 01482 605304

Breastfeeding Helpline: 07980 731 013

Doula Project and Breastfeeding Peer Support: 01482 497 811

Leto Birth Therapies Hull: 01482 491280 or 07532 013036

Home Start Hull (Volunteer Family and Parental Support): 01482 324063

Staying Fit and Community Groups

Us Mums Hull (Fitness Group for mums and pregnant women) Facebook Page: @usmumshull

Hull Fitmums and Friends: fitmums.org.uk

Depression and Anxiety

House of Light Hull (Postnatal Depression):

CALL - 01482 580499 or 0800 043 2031

TEXT - 07854 220790

Let's Talk Hull (Depression and Anxiety Service):

CALL - 01482 247 111

TEXT – 'Talk' to 61825

Perinatal Mental Health Service Hull (Humber NHS Teaching Foundation Trust): 01482 617735

If you would like to find out more about free screenings available in the UK visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-screening

OR

Contact your local Healthwatch, contact details can be found below:

healthwatch

East Riding of Yorkshire

Phone: 01482 665 684

Email: enquiries@healthwatcheastridingofyorkshire.co.uk

Website: www.healthwatcheastridingofyorkshire.co.uk

healthwatch

Kingston upon Hull

Phone: 01482 595505

Email: enquiries@healthwatchkingstonuponhull.co.uk

Website: www.healthwatchkingstonuponhull.co.uk

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North East Lincolnshire

Phone: 01472 361 459

Email: enquiries@healthwatchnortheastlincolnshire.co.uk

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