

## Patient information

# Screening options: when the combined screening test cannot be performed

### Purpose of early pregnancy screening

Screening tests are used to find people at higher chance of a health condition. In early pregnancy screening tests are offered to find out how likely it is that your baby has Down's syndrome, Edwards' syndrome or Patau's syndrome.

Further information about the purpose and risks of screening, as well as more detailed information about the conditions screened for is available in the leaflet "Screening Tests for you and your baby", available in multiple languages here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/screening-tests-for-you-and-your-baby>

Screening is not perfect and might provide an incorrect result. It may lead to personal choices about your pregnancy.

If you choose to have screening for Down's syndrome, Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome the recommended test for singleton and twin pregnancies is called the combined screening test and is performed in the first trimester. Sometimes it is not possible to complete the scan part of the combined test despite two attempts. You have been given this information leaflet because combined screening cannot be offered in this pregnancy.

This might be because:

- You are more than 14 weeks pregnant. After 14 weeks of pregnancy it is not appropriate to offer the combined screening test.
- Your baby is lying in a position at the dating scan where the nuchal translucency (the appearance of the pocket of fluid under the skin behind the baby's neck) cannot be measured.

- You are above average weight and the nuchal translucency measurement cannot be measured.

The combined screening test relies on this nuchal translucency measurement, alongside a blood test taken from you to measure biomarkers in your blood and information about maternal demographics. Without having all this information, a combined screening test cannot be offered.

In these cases, your screening choices are:

1. Quadruple screening for Down's syndrome and open neural tube conditions.
2. No quadruple screening

(Please note Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome will be screened for as part of your routine anomaly scan around 20 weeks of pregnancy.)

## Quadruple screening test

### What does the quadruple test involve?

A sample of your blood will be taken to measure four substances in your blood:

- Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP)
- Total human chorionic gonadotrophin (hCG)
- Unconjugated oestriol (uE3)
- Inhibin-A (inhibin)

### What does the quadruple test screen for?

- **Down's syndrome:** The quadruple test screens for Down's syndrome. In pregnancies with Down's syndrome, AFP and uE3 levels tend to be low and hCG and inhibin levels tend to be raised. It is important to note the quadruple screening test is not as accurate as the first trimester combined screening test.
- **Neural tube conditions:** The level of AFP is measured to identify pregnancies at increased chance of having a baby with a neural tube condition, such as spina bifida.

## Twin pregnancies and quadruple screening

Women with a twin pregnancy considering quadruple screening should have a more detailed conversation with the screening team or obstetrician before having the test undertaken. This is due to the complexities and limitations of the

quadruple test in this scenario. Please contact the screening team on the number below.

## **When should quadruple screening occur?**

Quadruple screening is ideally taken at around 15 or 16 weeks of pregnancy (from 14 + 3 is acceptable). **The last opportunity to have quadruple screening is 20+0 days of pregnancy.**

If you would like to have a quadruple screening test please ensure you have an appointment to have this test taken within this timeframe. Please contact the screening team on the number below if you need to rearrange or wish to decline quadruple screening.

## **Quadruple screening results**

Results from your quadruple test take around 1 - 2 weeks to be received. A letter with your results will be posted to your home address on most occasions. If your screening result requires further discussion, the screening team will phone you (please note the hospital phone number comes up as withheld).

Your quadruple screening result will identify if your pregnancy is lower or higher chance of having a baby with Down's syndrome.

A lower-chance result means it is unlikely, though still possible, that your baby will have the condition. A 'lower-chance' result is 1 chance in 151 or more, for example 1 chance in 300.

A higher-chance result means it is more likely, but not certain, that your baby will have the condition. A 'higher-chance' result is 1 chance in up to 150, for example 1 chance in 100.

To understand what, for example, '1 chance in 300' means, imagine a group of 300 women. One of these women will be pregnant with a baby that has the condition. Pregnancies with a higher chance result for Down's syndrome or neural tube conditions will be offered additional screening options. The screening team will phone you to discuss these further.

## **Screening for Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome**

Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome will be screened for as part of the 20-week anomaly scan. Occasionally, some conditions can be suspected at this scan. We will refer you to a specialist if required.

## Private screening options

Further screening options for Down's syndrome, Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome are available privately outside of the NHS. These are often referred to as Harmony or DNA tests. We cannot recommend private providers.

## Not having the test

Screening is your choice. Some people want to find out if their baby is high risk of having a condition and some do not. If you choose not to have the quadruple screening, the rest of your antenatal care will be unaffected.

## Contact details

If you have any questions, please contact the Antenatal and New Born Screening Co-ordinator midwives on 01284 712567 or email: [ANNBscreening@wsh.nhs.uk](mailto:ANNBscreening@wsh.nhs.uk)

National PHE leaflets provide additional information in multiple languages:



### Fetal anomaly screening: early pregnancy scan

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-pregnancy-scan-brief-description](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-pregnancy-scan-brief-description)



### Screening tests for you and your baby

[www.gov.uk/phe/pregnancy-newborn-screening](http://www.gov.uk/phe/pregnancy-newborn-screening)

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)*

<https://www.accessable.co.uk>



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