Patient information

Raised nuchal translucency identified at dating scan

What is a raised nuchal translucency?

You have received this information leaflet as, during your ultrasound scan, your baby has been found to have a raised nuchal translucency (NT). Every baby has fluid under the skin at the back of their neck which is referred to as 'nuchal translucency' or the 'nuchal fold'. A raised NT is classified as a measurement of 3.5mm or more.

The NT is measured as part of the combined screening test for Down's syndrome, Edward's syndrome and Patau's syndrome. The NT measurement is combined with maternal characteristics such as your age and ethnic origin, along with measurements of certain markers in your blood to calculate a chance result of a pregnancy being affected by one of these conditions and gives you a low or high-risk rate.

What does this mean?

A raised NT can be associated with an increased chance that your baby may have a physical or chromosomal condition, however, it is important that you remember that a raised NT does not definitely mean there is a problem. **Many babies with a raised NT on ultrasound scan do not have a physical or chromosomal condition and the raised NT can resolve during the pregnancy.**

A raised NT can be associated with chromosomal conditions such as Down's syndrome, Edward's syndrome and Patau's syndrome. You will be offered testing to screen for these conditions, as well as further analysis for a wider range of chromosomal conditions, if you would like it.

A raised NT can sometimes be associated with heart conditions. You will be offered further investigation which usually involves a detailed scan of your baby's heart (called a fetal echocardiogram) around 16 - 18 weeks.

What happens now?

You will be counselled by a specialist midwife regarding the different options available going forward. These options include:

1) You can choose to do nothing and continue your pregnancy with no further screening or testing.

2) To have further screening/testing for chromosomal anomalies.

Whichever option you choose we recommend you still have the first trimester combined screening. These results will be reported as a higher or a lower chance of your baby being affected by a chromosomal condition. If your result is higher chance you will be offered Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing (NIPT) or diagnostic testing. The screening midwife at West Suffolk Hospital will phone you with your screening result and discuss the options available if it is a higher chance result.

View information about options after a higher chance screening result - GOV.UK

Additional screening

We recommend referral to a Fetal Medicine Unit (FMU) to have a detailed scan and discussion with a fetal medicine consultant irrespective of which option you choose.

The Fetal Medicine Unit will be at either the Rosie Maternity Hospital at Addenbrooke's in Cambridge, or the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.

Once we have sent your referral, this is day zero. The FMU team will review your referral and contact you by telephone to arrange an appointment; this may show as a blocked number. You will usually be seen within five days of referral.

You will be seen by a fetal medicine consultant who will perform a more in-depth ultrasound scan of your baby. They will discuss any additional tests with you and depending on the findings of the scan/tests, they will plan your ongoing care with you alongside the antenatal and newborn screening midwives at West Suffolk Hospital.

You will also be offered diagnostic testing for chromosomal conditions. This is done via Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS) or Amniocentesis (Amnio). Diagnostic testing carries a 0.5% chance of miscarriage and is the only way to exclude or confirm if your baby has a chromosomal condition.
View information about CVS and amniocentesis diagnostic tests – GOV.UK
Many babies with a raised nuchal translucency identified on scan do not have any health conditions.

If you, your partner, or family have any further questions or queries, please do contact the antenatal and newborn screening midwives. We understand this can be a worrying time and are here to support you.

Useful information

Antenatal Results and Choices (ARC)

Information about chromosomal conditions and diagnostic testing which may be offered at a fetal medicine unit: Screening in pregnancy information leaflets GOV.UK

Contact details

Telephone: 01284 712567

Or email: ANNBscreening@wsh.nhs.uk

Clinical research

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

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/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust

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