

Maternity Department

Low PAPP-A

Information for parents

We have sent you a letter with an appointment for a 34 week growth scan due to detection of a low PAPP-A level.

What is PAPP-A?

Pregnancy associated plasma protein A (PAPP-A) is a hormone that is produced by the placenta in pregnancy.

It is one of two hormones that are measured during the 12 week combined screening test. Low levels of PAPP-A can be associated with Down's Syndrome. If your baby has an increased risk for Down's Syndrome, one of the antenatal screening midwives will have contacted you before sending you this leaflet.

Studies have shown that low PAPP-A may also be associated with low birth weight babies and early deliveries. Because of this, national guidelines suggest that extra scans should be considered to check the growth of babies when a low PAPP-A level has been found.

What is a normal PAPP-A level?

You will have noticed on your combined test report that the two hormones are listed as a concentration (IU/L) and as a MoM value. MoM stands for multiple of the median, or average, of everyone's results.

A MoM of 1.00 is average; higher than 1.00 is above average; and lower than 1.00 is below average. We will recommend additional screening of your baby if your PAPP-A levels are below 0.40 MoM, as these are more likely to be associated with smaller babies.

When will I have the growth scan?

We will ask you to come to the day assessment unit on either the Winchester or Basingstoke site at 34 weeks. As well as checking the baby's growth, the sonographer will check the placenta (after-birth) and the amniotic fluid (water) levels. If the baby is growing well and the fluid volume is normal, you will either need further scans or additional follow up.

If there are any concerns about the baby's growth, we will arrange follow up appointments with you on the same day you had the scan. When we next see you will depend on your individual circumstances.

How will I know my baby is growing well before and after the 34 week scan?

Every pregnant woman should have an individualised GROW chart attached to her handheld notes. From 25 weeks your midwife will measure your bump and plot the measurement on the chart. The chart will show if your baby is growing as expected. If there are any concerns, your midwife will refer you to the day assessment unit for an additional growth scan.

At the 20 week scan, we will have given you a booklet called 'How to keep your baby safe in the last stages of pregnancy'. Please read this booklet carefully. If you have any concerns about your baby's movements, please contact the appropriate day assessment unit on 01256 313351 (Basingstoke) or 01962 824744 (Winchester).

Is there anything I can do help my baby to grow well?

If you smoke, it is extremely important that you stop. Smoking can affect the placenta and the baby's growth. Your midwife can refer you for help to stop smoking or you can refer yourself to Quit 4 Life (Hampshire's NHS stop smoking service) on 0845 602 4633 or www.quit4life.nhs.uk

Who can I speak to if I need further information?

You are welcome to phone one of the antenatal screening midwives if you have any queries or concerns.

Receiving the news that you have low PAPP-A levels may cause anxiety but please be assured that the majority of babies will have normal growth.

For those babies that are found to be small you will have the reassurance of close surveillance with the team in the day assessment unit and the obstetricians.

Further information

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

www.rcog.org.uk/womens-health/patient-information

('Having a small baby' leaflet)

Useful contacts

Antenatal screening midwives

Basingstoke 01256 314720

Winchester 01962 825585

Maternity day assessment unit

Basingstoke 01256 313351

Winchester 01962 824744

www.hampshirehospitals.nhs.uk

Maternity Services
March, 2016
Review March, 2018
FCS/ 214/ 2016
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