



Newborn blood cultures

Information for parents of babies who have been discharged home with a blood culture result pending.

Why has my baby had a blood culture taken?

Your baby has been reviewed by the neonatal team, and has been noted to be at a slightly increased risk of an infection. As a result, a blood test has been performed to see if they have any bugs (bacteria) in their blood stream. There is no evidence of this at 24 hours, and your baby is well and so they are fit for discharge.

Could the blood culture still show something?

The blood culture will remain in the laboratory until 36 hours after it has been taken, and so we will continue to monitor it whilst you are at home. This means that there is a very small chance that a positive result can occur, even though you have been discharged. If this happens, the neonatal team will contact you and inform you of the next steps. This will involve returning to hospital, repeating a blood test and commencing intravenous antibiotics on your baby.

Can my baby become unwell?

Regardless of the blood culture result, your baby could become unwell at any point (like any other baby). It is really important that you seek urgent medical attention if you notice any of the following symptoms:

- Temperature of 38°C or more, or feeling hot to touch
- Temperature of less than 36°C, or feeling cold to touch
- Poor feeding
- Reduced wet and dirty nappies
- Persistently rapid breathing or difficulty with breathing
- Changes in skin colour – pale or jaundiced (yellow skin or eyes)
- Increased lethargy – being tired, not waking for feeds
- Changes in behaviour such as being irritable or inconsolable

If your baby is displaying any of the above symptoms, or you are concerned about them, please go to A&E immediately. Inform the A&E team that your baby has a blood culture pending.

What happens after 36 hours?

The blood culture will be reported as 'negative'. You will not receive a call in this instance, but please be reassured that the result is normal.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Maternity & Paediatrics / Dr Sam Bilton, Paediatric/Neonatal Registrar &
Mrs Kirsty Dixon, Advanced Neonatal Nurse Practitioner, July 2025. Next review due: July 2027.