



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Low PAPP-A result and extra scans

Information on what this means
for your pregnancy.

You are being offered growth scans later in your pregnancy because your screening result for Down's, Edward's and Patau's syndromes found a low level of PAPP-A. The schedule for additional checks is a nationally recommended one followed by this hospital.

What is PAPP-A?

Pregnancy associated plasma protein A (PAPP-A) is a hormone that is produced by the placenta (the 'afterbirth') in pregnancy. Your baby's placenta produces PAPP-A and you cannot influence the level of PAPP-A in your blood.

PAPP-A is one of the two hormones measured during the 12-week combined screening test.

Some studies have shown that low PAPP-A can sometimes be linked with babies who are 'smaller than expected' for their age. 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.

If your blood tests suggest that your baby has an increased possibility of having Down's syndrome, Edwards syndrome or Patau's syndrome, one of the screening midwives should have contacted you before sending you this leaflet and will have given you further important information about these syndromes and options.

When will I have the growth scan?

You will have your routine scan around twenty weeks as usual. As well as checking the baby's growth, the sonographer (person performing the ultrasound scan) will check the blood flow through the placenta (afterbirth) and the amniotic fluid (water in the womb) levels surrounding the baby.

If this shows that your baby is healthy and growing at the expected rate, with good blood flow in the cord, and the expected amount of amniotic fluid, you will then be invited for ultrasound scan appointments every 4 weeks from either 28 or 32 weeks to continue to monitor your baby's growth. Your sonographer will let you know whether your next scan is at 28 or 32 weeks.

You do not need to be seen by a doctor in a hospital clinic and, if all findings are normal, you can continue to see your midwife for all other routine check-ups.

If there are any concerns about your baby's growth or wellbeing, you may need more frequent scans and antenatal clinic appointments. We will offer these appointments to you as appropriate for your situation, and the appointments will be with a consultant obstetrician. These are on the RBH site only.

Will my baby need to be born early, or by Caesarean birth?

A low PAPP-A result is not, by itself, a reason for an early delivery by induction of labour or Caesarean birth. Your scans will be reviewed and if your baby is considered to be small for their age, or there are any other concerns you will be invited to speak with an obstetrician (doctor) who can explain the recommendations for induction of labour before 40 weeks or your choices about how you give birth.

As the ultrasound is a clinical examination, we regret that older children are not allowed in the ultrasound room.

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

Your midwife will refer you to the stop smoking service based within the maternity teams at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. You are four times more likely to stop smoking with the right support. If you smoke, it is extremely important that you stop and that you ensure

your home is smoke free. Smoking and exposure to second hand smoke can prevent oxygen reaching your baby, which can slow your baby's/babies' growth and development. Your midwife can refer you to the stop smoking service based within the maternity teams at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. You are four times more likely to stop smoking with the right support.

Useful numbers

If you wish to discuss this further prior to your appointment, please contact the screening midwives **0118 322 7292 / 8507**.

If you wish to change your appointment date or time, please call the appointments line **0118 322 8964**.

Further information

Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologist patient information - <https://www.rcog.org.uk/for-the-public/browse-our-patient-information/having-a-small-baby/>

RCOG Small for gestational age guideline link:
www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/gtg_31.pdf

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

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

Antenatal Screening Midwife, March 2024

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