

When a scan shows a nuchal translucency (NT) measurement of 3.5 millimetres or more

Information for parents



Aim

We have given you this leaflet because your baby's nuchal translucency (NT) is 3.5 millimetres (mm) or more. We hope that this leaflet will answer some of your questions. We will offer you an appointment with a specialist doctor or midwife to discuss what this NT measurement might mean for your baby.

What is nuchal translucency (NT)?

Every unborn baby has some fluid under the skin at the back of their neck. This fluid is called nuchal translucency (NT). You can see this fluid on the ultrasound scan early on in your pregnancy. It is part of a baby's normal development in the womb. If your baby has more fluid than usual, it can sometimes be a sign that they have a health problem. This may be a physical problem (for example, a heart problem) or chromosome condition (for example, Down's syndrome).

It is important to remember that many babies who have more fluid than usual at the back of their neck at an early scan are born healthy and well.

Why do you measure NT?

All pregnant women in England are offered a screening test to give them information on the chance of their baby having Down's syndrome. We measure NT as part of the 'combined' screening test for Down's syndrome. This test combines the results of a blood test taken from the mother with the measurement of the NT from the baby seen on the scan.

You may have chosen not to have your baby screened for Down's syndrome. However, because an increased NT is also linked with physical problems and other chromosome conditions in your baby, the person doing the scan will tell you if they see more than 3.5mm of fluid at the back of your baby's neck.

What is a normal NT measurement?

We cannot give you a normal figure, because the NT usually grows in proportion with your baby. This means that the measurement depends on how many weeks pregnant you are when you have your scan. However, we do know that if early in your pregnancy the NT is 3.5mm or more, there is more chance that your baby will have a physical problem or chromosome condition.

What happens now I know my baby has an increased NT measurement?

We will offer you an appointment with a specialist to discuss what this may mean for your baby. At this appointment your specialist will give you more information and you will have time to ask them questions. The specialist will probably offer you more tests. It will be up to you whether or not to have any more tests. If the tests show there is a problem with your baby, you will be supported to make the choice that is right for you and your family.

Although this can be worrying, it is important to remember that many babies whose NT measurement is 3.5mm or more are healthy. An increased NT does not mean there is definitely a problem.

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions while you are waiting for your appointment with a specialist, please contact the screening midwife at your hospital or your own midwife or family doctor.

Screening co-ordinator stamp with contact details

You may also find it helpful to contact the following charities and support groups.

Antenatal Results and Choices (ARC) www.arc-uk.org	73 Charlotte Street London W1T 4PN Helpline: 0207 631 0285 Email: info@arc-uk.org	Antenatal Results and Choices (ARC) provides impartial information and individual support to parents while they are going through antenatal screening or when their unborn baby has been diagnosed with an abnormality.
Contact a Family (CAFAMILY) www.cafamily.org.uk	209 - 211 City Road London EC1V 1JN Helpline: 0808 808 3555 Email: info@cafamily.org.uk	Contact a Family is a charity which provides support, advice and information for families with disabled children, no matter what their condition or disability.

At a time like this it is natural to want as much information as possible. Many people choose to look at information on the internet, but please remember that some websites contain information that is not accurate.

Definitions

<p>Nuchal translucency (NT) scan</p>	<p>You will have an NT scan when you are between 11 weeks and 2 days and 14 weeks and 1 day pregnant. The NT scan measures the thickness of the fluid at the back of your baby's neck. An increased amount of fluid may show that your baby has a physical problem or chromosome problem. By combining your age and how many weeks pregnant you are with information from the scan, your midwife or doctor will know your chance of having a problem during your pregnancy. If you have a one in 150 chance or higher, you will be offered a diagnostic test, such as a chorionic villus sampling (CVS) test.</p>
<p>Chorionic villus sampling (CVS)</p>	<p>CVS is a test carried out during pregnancy which involves removing tissue from the placenta. CVS is used to detect chromosomal abnormalities such as Down's syndrome or conditions such as sickle-cell diseases. It can also detect certain other genetic conditions. CVS is also known as a diagnostic test because it gives you a diagnosis. For example, it tells you that your baby does or does not have Down's syndrome.</p>
<p>Chromosome condition</p>	<p>Chromosomes are structures which are found in the nucleus of a cell, and are made up of DNA and proteins. Normally humans have 46 chromosomes in each cell, 23 from each parent. Of these, 22 are autosomes and one is a sex chromosome. A chromosome condition is when there is a change in the number or arrangement of the normal 23 pairs of chromosomes which has an effect on the health of the baby.</p>
<p>Down's syndrome (Trisomy 21 or T21)</p>	<p>Down's syndrome is a disorder caused by having an extra chromosome. People with Down's syndrome have three copies of chromosome number 21 instead of two. Down's syndrome affects all population groups. People with the condition usually have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low muscle tone; • a flatter face; • eyes which slant upward; • small ears; • an unusually wide neck; and • a deep crease across the palm of their hand. <p>Some people may also have heart problems or sight problems or may develop Alzheimer's disease. Although people with Down's syndrome have learning problems, these vary in how severe they are.</p>
<p>Specialist</p>	<p>A specialist could include an obstetrician, a fetal medicine nurse, an antenatal clinic midwife, or a specialist Sonographer</p>



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