



Screening for Down's syndrome, Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome

An **easy guide** to screening tests when you are pregnant



Contents: what is in this booklet

Page



Your choice

3



About these tests

4



Down's syndrome

6



Edwards' syndrome and
Patau's syndrome

7



Test results

8



Your choice



This booklet has information about tests you can have.

The tests can find conditions early but they may not find every condition.

If we find a condition early we can give you information or tell you about treatment for you or the baby.



The tests can show if the baby may have Down's syndrome, Edwards' syndrome or Patau's syndrome.

You can choose if you want to have the tests.



They can help you make choices about your care when you are pregnant.

If you are worried, you can talk to your midwife or doctor.



About these tests



We only show the results of the tests to health staff who need to see them.



It is important to tell your midwife or health visitor about any health problems you have.



It is rare for a baby to have Down's syndrome.

It is very rare for a baby to have Edwards' or Patau's syndromes.

If you are between 10 and 14 weeks pregnant you can have a test for all 3 syndromes.



There are 2 parts to the test.

1. We take a small drop of blood from your arm.



2. We take a scan of your tummy.

These tests do not hurt the baby.



These 2 tests can find out if there is a chance the baby will have:

- Down's syndrome
- Edwards' or Patau's syndromes

The tests cannot tell for sure if your baby will have one of these syndromes.

The tests can only tell if there is a higher chance or a lower chance.



Down's syndrome



A baby born with Down's syndrome will have learning disabilities.

This means they will find it harder to understand and to learn new things.

We cannot know how much of a learning disability they will have.



Most children with Down's syndrome will go to their local primary school.

Many people with Down's syndrome have jobs and can live on their own.



People with Down's syndrome often have other health problems.

Some of these problems may be serious.



Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome



Most babies with Edwards' or Patau's syndrome die before they are born or soon after they are born.

Very few live to be adults.



All babies with Edwards' or Patau's syndrome have a lot of very serious health problems.



Test results



If your baby has a higher chance of having one of these syndromes then someone will contact you in 3 working days.



If your baby has a lower chance of one of these syndromes then someone will contact you in 2 weeks.



If there is a higher chance that the baby has one of these syndromes we can give you another test to find out for sure if the baby has one of these conditions or not.

This is called a diagnostic test. The diagnostic test has a small chance of making you miscarry. If you miscarry then the baby does not live.

You can say no to this test.



If there is a higher chance that your baby has one of these syndromes and you are between 11 and 14 weeks pregnant you can have a chorionic villus sampling test.

This is sometimes called a CVS test.



This means that a very thin needle is put into your tummy.

This takes away a tiny bit of the placenta. The placenta links you to the baby.

We can test this for the syndromes.



If there is a high chance that your baby has one of these syndromes and you are 15 weeks or more pregnant you can have an amniocentesis.



If you have an amniocentesis a very thin needle is put into your tummy.

This takes a tiny bit of fluid from around the baby.

This can be tested for the syndromes.

Only a small number of babies have one of these syndromes.



Some women who are told that their baby has one of these syndromes decide to carry on with the pregnancy.

Some women who are told that their baby has one of these syndromes decide they do not want to carry on with the pregnancy.

They have an abortion. This means the baby does not live.



If the baby has Down's, Edwards' or Patau's syndrome we will give you support to decide whether or not to have an abortion.

This is your decision.



It is important to tell your midwife or health visitor if you move home.

First published: February 2017

© Crown copyright 2018

Re-use of Crown copyright material (excluding logos) is allowed under the terms of the Open Government Licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/2/ for terms and conditions.

Images courtesy of:

Photosymbols – calendar (pages 4, 8 and 9), house move (page 10)

Down's Syndrome Association – page 6

NHS Photo Library – pages 7, 8 and 9

PHE publications gateway number: 2013432



Find out how Public Health England and the NHS use and protect your screening information at www.gov.uk/phe/screening-data.