Screening Tests For You And Your Baby

This booklet gives you information on the screening tests you will be offered during your pregnancy and after your baby is born. It explains the different types of test and what the tests are looking for.

We hope that reading this booklet will help prepare you for discussions with your midwife or doctor so that you can ask the questions that are important to you. It will be helpful if you have the booklet with you when you see them.

It is your decision whether or not to have any of the tests described in this booklet.

Introduction - What you need to know about screening

What are screening tests?
Screening tests are used to find people at higher risk of a health problem. This means they can get earlier, potentially more effective, treatment or make informed decisions about their health. It can be helpful to imagine screening like putting people through a sieve. Most people pass straight through but a small number get caught in the sieve. The people caught in the sieve are those considered to be at higher risk of having the health problem being screened for.

Screening tests are not perfect. Some people will be told that they or their baby are at high risk of having a health problem when in fact they do not have the problem. Also a few people will be told that they or their baby are at low risk of having a health problem when in fact they do have the problem.

What is the difference between screening tests and diagnostic tests?
A screening test can find out if you, or your baby, are at high or low risk of having a health problem. But it cannot usually tell you for certain, so people found to be at high risk of a problem will often be offered a second test. This is called a diagnostic test and gives a more definite ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer.

Screening tests during and after pregnancy
You will be offered screening tests during pregnancy to try to find any health problems that could affect you or your baby. The tests can help you to make choices about care or treatment during your pregnancy or after your baby is born.

Some screening tests are offered for your baby soon after he or she is born. We offer these so that your baby can be given appropriate treatment as quickly as possible if needed.

Some practicalities
If you know that you, the father of the baby, or a family member already has the health problem being screened for, please tell your midwife.
If you move home while you are waiting for the results of any screening test, please tell your midwife or health visitor your new address.

Other Headings in Leaflet
Infectious diseases
Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia
Down’s, Edwards’ and Patau’s syndromes
Physical abnormalities (mid pregnancy scan)
Eye problems in women with diabetes
Heart, eyes, hips and testes (physical examination)
Hearing loss
Blood spot