

RISKS OF THE TEST

Amniocentesis has been carried out for many years and we have gathered a lot of information about its effects.

We do know that the test can cause miscarriage. It is suggested that one woman in every 100 may miscarry, that is over and above the normal incidence for miscarriage.

The test may reveal a chromosome problem other than the one tested for.

Occasionally the cells fail to grow and then we would not have a result for you. You may be offered a repeat test.

Further information is available at
www.rcog.org.uk/guidelines

PATIENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

It is important that you speak to the department you have been referred to if you have any questions (for example, about medication) before your investigation or procedure.

If you are unhappy about the service you have received and would like to talk about it or make a formal complaint, please contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0300 123 1732.

If you have a complaint and you want it to be investigated, you should write direct to the Chief Executive at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, Charles Hastings Way, Worcester WR5 1DD or contact the Patient Services Department for advice.

If you would like this information in other formats or languages please call 01905 760453 or email: communications@worcsacute.nhs.uk.

www.worcsacute.nhs.uk

AMNIOCENTESIS

Patient Information

WHAT IS AMNIOCENTESIS?

A small amount of the fluid that surrounds the baby is removed and sent to the laboratory for testing.

WHY IS IT DONE?

The test is offered to women considered to be at an increased risk of having a baby with a chromosomal abnormality.

WHERE IS IT DONE?

Amniocentesis is usually carried out in the antenatal clinic. It will be performed by a doctor. A midwife or sonographer will also be present.

You will be scanned prior to and during the procedure.

There will be the opportunity to ask questions or to discuss any problems with the staff, before, during and after the amniocentesis.

One relative or friend may stay with you during the test if you wish.

HOW IS IT DONE?

No sedation is required and meals may be taken as normal beforehand.

The doctor will clean the skin with an antiseptic lotion then pass a fine needle through the skin of the abdomen and into the amniotic fluid that surrounds the baby. A sample of fluid about three teaspoons (15mls) will be drawn off with a syringe.

The needle will then be withdrawn. Sometimes it is necessary to pass the needle a 2nd time to obtain enough fluid.

The whole procedure will take 10-15 minutes, but you may be in clinic for approximately 1 hour.

IS THE TEST PAINFUL?

Most women say that the procedure is uncomfortable but not painful and in most cases the thought is much worse than the actual test.

AFTERWARDS

You may experience some abdominal discomfort following the test but this should settle in a day or two. If symptoms persist or get worse you should contact your GP or community midwife.

It is advisable to travel by car. However, a reasonable journey by public transport is acceptable if no other arrangements are possible.

You may go home as soon as the procedure is finished. For the first 48 hours following the amniocentesis test it is advisable to rest but not usually necessary to go to bed. You should avoid heavy lifting or strenuous exercise. If you have a heavy job or have to stand all day, you should have a day or two off work.

TEST RESULTS

The amniotic fluid sample will be used for both a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test and full amniotic fluid culture.

The results of the PCR test which is used to test for the more common chromosome abnormalities including Downs syndrome should be available in 72-96 hours. However, it may not be possible to do the PCR test if the sample is bloodstained.

The results of the full amniotic fluid culture will usually be available in 2-3 weeks. The results of the test will be posted to you as soon as they are available.

If any abnormality is discovered, you will be contacted as soon as possible and an appointment will be made for you to see the Consultant who will discuss the result in more detail and counsel you with regard to choices for the remainder of your pregnancy.