

Protecting you and your baby



**Your first
antenatal visit**

This leaflet tells you about the blood tests that are normally done at your first antenatal visit. These tests look for possible health problems which could affect your pregnancy if not detected and treated.

Only one sample of blood is needed to do all six tests.

If you have any questions about these tests please discuss them with one of the doctors or midwives at the antenatal clinic.

These tests and their results are all confidential. The professionals providing your maternity care will normally give you these results at your next antenatal visit. If not, feel free to ask for your test results.





If any of your tests are positive you will be offered further advice and counselling and appropriate follow-up and treatment. Any treatment that you are offered will be designed to safeguard your health and your baby's health. Any medication offered will be the safest possible.

Before a blood sample is taken, you will be asked if you consent to these tests. You can refuse consent to any of them. It is important to remember, however, that these are routine tests, which are designed to protect the health of you and your baby, and you are recommended to accept them.

Full blood count/haemoglobin level

The main purpose of this blood test is to check that you are not anaemic (have a low blood count). Anaemia makes you tired and less able to cope with losing blood when your baby is delivered. If you do have anaemia this can be treated easily and safely.

Blood group

This test tells you which blood group you are. This is important if you need a blood transfusion. It also shows whether your blood is Rhesus negative or positive.

- About one in six mothers are Rhesus negative. Rhesus negative mothers will need an injection called anti D if they have a threatened miscarriage, or an injury to their tummy during pregnancy.
- Rhesus negative mothers will also need anti D after the birth if the baby is Rhesus positive; this protects their next baby from anaemia and jaundice.



Rubella

This test checks whether you are immune to the rubella virus (German measles).

Most adults in Northern Ireland are immune, but if you are not immune you should try to avoid contact with anyone who has rubella.

If you do come into contact with someone who has the virus then you should discuss this with your doctor urgently. Blood tests will show whether you have been infected.

- Getting rubella in early pregnancy can seriously damage your unborn baby.
- If you become infected with rubella during early pregnancy your doctor will discuss this with you.
- If you are not immune to rubella you should be immunised after your baby is born, to protect you in future pregnancies.

Syphilis

This is a blood test used to detect syphilis, a sexually transmitted infection (STI) which is not very common in Northern Ireland.

- It is possible to have syphilis without knowing it.
- Syphilis can have serious effects on your baby, including miscarriage or stillbirth, if not treated during pregnancy.
- If this test is positive, safe and effective treatment with antibiotics is available, which will not harm the baby.

Hepatitis B

This test detects hepatitis B, a virus that can cause liver disease.

- If you are a carrier of the virus or are infected during pregnancy your baby may also become infected.
- If necessary your baby can be immunised at birth to reduce the risk of infection.
- You will also be offered further advice and follow-up.

Hepatitis B is not common in Northern Ireland, but it is much more common outside Europe, particularly in Southeast Asia and the Far East. People who have lived in these areas are more likely to carry the disease, which they may have contracted at any stage, including at birth. It can also be transmitted sexually and through injecting drug use.

HIV

This test detects the virus that causes AIDS.

- If you are infected with HIV you can pass the infection to your baby during pregnancy, at delivery or after birth by breastfeeding.
- If you are HIV positive, both you and your baby can have treatment and care, including special drugs, to reduce the risk of your baby becoming infected.
- This treatment helps to protect your own health, as well as the health of your baby.
- You may be offered a planned caesarean section, and you will be advised not to breastfeed.

Risk factors for HIV and hepatitis B

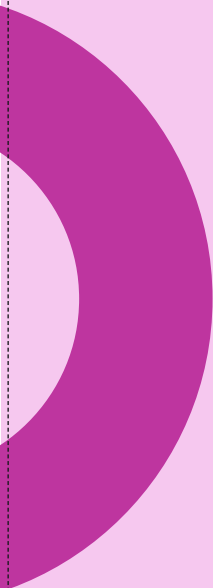
Many people without knowing it have been at risk of acquiring infections such as HIV and hepatitis B.

The risk of being infected with HIV or hepatitis B is increased if you or any sexual partner in your lifetime has:

- had unprotected sex;
- had multiple sexual partners;
- had homosexual sex;
- been a victim of rape;
- been an injecting drug user;
- had sex with someone from countries in which HIV or hepatitis B is much commoner than in the United Kingdom or Ireland;
- had medical treatment involving blood products in certain countries with high rates of HIV or hepatitis B infection;
- been a haemophiliac receiving treatment before 1986.

If you are concerned about a particular risk please discuss this with your doctor or midwife. They can advise you as to any other tests that may be required besides the routine screening ones.

The fact that you accepted tests for hepatitis B and HIV as part of your antenatal care does not affect your ability to obtain insurance. A positive test for either of these may affect future health or life insurance.



Remember to bring this leaflet with you to the antenatal clinic. Your midwife or doctor can help you fill in the form overleaf.

All six blood tests are routine and you are recommended to consent to all of them.



Consent to antenatal blood tests

Form to be completed at antenatal clinic

Name:

Address:

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Contact address (if different):

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Daytime telephone number:

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I consent to have a blood sample taken from me for: (please tick all that apply)

Full blood count/
haemoglobin level

Syphilis

Hepatitis B

Blood group

HIV

Rubella

I understand the reasons for these tests.

Signed:
(patient/person with parental responsibility)

Date:

Witnessed by:
(midwife/doctor)

Date:

**This leaflet is available in other languages
from your midwife/doctor or from the DHSSPS
website:www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/phealth**



Health
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