

## **Ultrasound and Fetal Medicine Centre**

### **Information for women on your routine 18 to 22 weeks Ultrasound Scan**

#### **The routine 18 to 22 weeks scan**

As part of your care here at the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital, we offer you a pregnancy scan at approximately 18 to 22 weeks to see if your baby is developing normally. You can accept or decline this scan, please decide what you feel is right for you.

This information factsheet gives information about the benefits of this scan but also the limitations of the 18-22 week scan.

#### **What is an Ultrasound Scan?**

Ultrasound uses high frequency sound waves which cannot be heard by the human ear, to produce images of your baby. Ultrasound has been routinely used in pregnancy for over 35 years and there is no evidence to date that it is harmful to the developing baby.

#### **Why have a scan?**

The vast majority of babies are normal. However, all women, whatever their age, have a small chance of delivering a baby with a physical or mental limitation. A scan can check for many abnormalities. There are other valid medical reasons for your midwife or doctor to request a scan. These include:

- To estimate the baby's due date
- To demonstrate the heart beat
- To identify the number of babies
- To determine the position of the afterbirth
- To check the amniotic fluid around the baby
- To monitor the growth of the baby if there is concern about the size
- To examine the structure of the baby

## **When is a scan performed?**

The timing of the scan will depend on the information being sought. In early pregnancy a scan can be performed if there is pain or bleeding. At the Coombe we will perform a scan at 18-22 weeks to perform all of the above checks.

## **How is the scan performed?**

You will be asked to lie on the couch and a water-based gel will be applied to your tummy. Your clothing will be protected with paper towelling. The ultrasound probe will then be moved over your skin. This gives images on the screen. It is a completely painless procedure and there is no sensation whatsoever for the baby. The scan in general takes approximately 10-15 minutes to perform, however this will depend on the clarity of the picture and on the indication for the scan. Various organs and structures are observed throughout the scan and obvious structural abnormalities may be seen.

## **Will a scan detect all abnormalities of the baby?**

The majority of babies are healthy at birth, but unfortunately about 3% of babies are born with a major birth defect. About half of these major defects will be seen on a scan and half will **not be** detected during the pregnancy. It is important to realise that ultrasound scans in pregnancy do not detect cerebral palsy, autism or all cases of Down Syndrome.

This means that even if your scan is normal there is a small chance that your baby may still have a problem because ultrasound has limitations. If a problem is suspected, you will be told at that stage that there may be a problem. A full discussion of the problem may require you to come back to the hospital for a further scan and discussion with a fetal medicine specialist. This can usually be organised within 24 hours if the problem is deemed urgent. Most problems that require a repeat scan are not serious and approximately 15% of scans will be repeated for one reason or another.

A list of different types of birth defects and how likely scanning is to identify each problem during pregnancy can be found later on in this factsheet.

## **Can you tell whether it is a boy or girl?**

The scan can sometimes tell what sex the baby appears to be, but not always. Determining the sex of the baby is not easy on scan, and is about 85% reliable at 18-22 weeks. We do not perform scans to identify the sex of the baby.

### **Do I need a full bladder for the scan?**

No, it is not necessary at this stage of the pregnancy unless you have specifically been advised to attend with a full bladder.

### **Can my partner attend the Ultrasound?**

Yes, your partner or one other person is welcome to attend the Ultrasound with you but please remember the sonographer needs to concentrate to make sure the baby has a thorough check-up and it is for this reason that we ask you to limit the number of attendees.

### **Can I have a photograph of the baby?**

Yes, of course, but again this depends on the baby being in the right position.

### **Can I request a scan?**

The hospital has limited resources and a scan is only performed for valid medical reasons on the instruction of a doctor.

### **Conditions and their pick up rate**

<u>Condition</u>	<u>What the problem is</u>	<u>Pick up rate</u>
Spina Bifida	Open spinal cord	90%
Anencephaly	Absence of the top of the skull	99%
Hydrocephalus	Excess fluid on the brain	60% - many cases present late in pregnancy
Major heart defects		30%
Diaphragmatic Hernia	A hole in the muscle that separates the chest and the abdomen	60%
Exomphalos /Gastroschisis	Defects in the abdominal wall	90%
Major kidney problems		85%

Major limb abnormalities		15%
Cerebral Palsy		Not seen
Autism		Not seen
Down Syndrome		About 40%

**We hope that the information supplied in this leaflet has been useful. We are constantly striving to improve information and communications with our expectant parents and if you have any suggestions on how this factsheet could be enhanced we would be delighted to hear from you.**

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