

Hepatitis C Screening - Antenatal Services

Frequently Asked Questions

St George's Antenatal Services are providing opt out hepatitis C testing to all women at booking alongside routine hepatitis B, HIV and syphilis screening. This is a pilot project which we are running to work towards the World Health Organisation target to eliminate Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) by 2030.

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is a blood borne virus that spreads through contact with infected blood. The most common routes of transmission are from blood transfusions before 1993, medical and dental procedures in some parts of the world, tattooing, body piercing or when injecting drugs. Hepatitis C is a major global health problem affecting over 1% of the world's population. The level of infection in the UK is thought to be around 0.5% but this increases to up to as high as 15% in some countries.

Hepatitis C is known as a silent virus and it can go undiagnosed for years. However, up to 30% of people can progress to liver damage and between 1% and 5% develop a liver cancer.

The risk of transmission of hepatitis C from mother to child is thought to be approximately 4-8%. Treatment is now available for hepatitis C but not during pregnancy. Hepatitis C has not been found to cause problems during pregnancy.

What results can I expect?

Negative results

A negative result means you are 'negative now'. This does not mean you are protected throughout your pregnancy. Protect yourself from infection by avoiding transmission and tell your midwife or GP as soon as possible if you have been at risk of hepatitis C.

Positive results

If you have hepatitis C it is important for specialist teams to check your health before and after the birth. Your partner, any other children and close family members may need testing and treatment. You will be offered treatment after you have given birth.

It is normal that your baby will come into contact with your blood when they are born. Because of this, the virus could be passed onto them. It is therefore very important that your baby is tested after birth.

Unfortunately, there is no vaccination for babies against hepatitis C but there is treatment available and it is important that children are under specialist care if they contract hepatitis C.

When will I get my hepatitis C result?

If your result is negative your midwife will discuss it with you. This will happen at or before your next antenatal appointment at about 16 weeks. It will also be recorded in your hand held maternity notes.

If you are positive for hepatitis C a specialist midwife will contact you to arrange an appointment within 10 days. The midwife will discuss the result, carry out further tests and refer you to the Viral Hepatitis Team for further assessment.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about hepatitis C testing, please contact Antenatal Team/Michael Bird: 020 8725 1734
Viral Hepatitis Team: 020 8725 0758

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

