

Pre-eclampsia blood test

What is Pre-eclampsia?

Pre-eclampsia is a condition that affects some pregnant women, usually during the second half of pregnancy (from around 20 weeks) or soon after their baby is delivered. It is associated with high blood pressure and symptoms such as headaches, swelling and sometimes visual disturbance. For some women, it can lead to life-threatening complications if left untreated.

Why do I need a test?

You have shown some symptoms that may suggest an increased risk of pre-eclampsia. By having this blood test your care team will have more information to help provide the best care for you and your baby. The blood test measures the amount of growth hormone made by your placenta, which circulates in high volumes during healthy pregnancy.

How is the sample taken?

A small amount of blood will be taken from your arm.

What happens if the test is positive?

If your test shows lower than expected levels of placental growth hormone, we will use this information along with other factors to advise you how your pregnancy can be managed in the best and safest way. This could be more regular visits to your community midwife or possibly admission to hospital for observation.

What happens if the test is negative?

If your test shows normal levels of placental growth hormone and your blood pressure is normal, it is likely you will go home with a plan for your next midwife contact. You will be asked to keep an eye on any symptoms and contact your midwife if you have any concerns.

Is the test accurate?

No diagnostic test is 100% accurate. Your care team will use the result along with other information to discuss decisions about your care with you.

Are there any alternative tests?

There are a few blood tests that help to provide an overall picture of whether pre-eclampsia is affecting your pregnancy. These may be taken alongside the test of placental growth hormone. You may be offered an additional ultrasound scan to monitor the growth of your baby.

Along with having your blood pressure measured and your urine checked for the presence of protein, it's important to notice any symptoms associated with pre-eclampsia e.g. headaches, swelling, visual disturbance. Every pregnancy is different, and your care team will explain the appropriate action to take if you have any concerns.

How long will the test take?

Your blood will be taken and tested within the maternity department. This means that the result will be available quickly. Your midwife will explain the result to you, and a doctor will help decide a suitable plan for your care.

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656 or 826319.