



Patient Information

Pre-Eclampsia Blood Test

Information for patients, relatives and carers

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.

Pre-eclampsia is thought to be caused by the placenta not developing properly due to a problem with the blood vessels supplying it. The exact cause isn't fully understood.

Early signs of pre-eclampsia include having high blood pressure (hypertension) and protein in your urine (proteinuria).

It's unlikely that you'll notice these signs, but they should be picked up during your routine antenatal appointments.

In some cases, further symptoms can develop, including:

- swelling of the feet, ankles, face and hands caused by fluid retention (oedema)
- severe headache
- vision problems
- pain just below the ribs

If you notice any symptoms of pre-eclampsia, seek medical advice immediately by calling your midwife, GP surgery or NHS 111.

Although many cases are mild, the condition can lead to serious complications for both mother and baby if it's not monitored and treated.

The earlier pre-eclampsia is diagnosed and monitored, the better the outlook for mother and baby.

Why do I need a test?



Pre-Eclampsia Blood Test

You have shown some symptoms that may suggest an increased risk of pre-eclampsia, by having this blood test your doctor will have more information to make a decision about the best care for you and your baby.

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 higher levels of the proteins involved in pre-eclampsia your doctor will use this information, along with other factors, to suggest how to manage the condition in the safest way for your pregnancy. 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 the proteins involved in pre-eclampsia and your blood pressure is normal you are okay to go home for at least 1 week. You will be asked to keep an eye on your symptoms and contact your midwife if anything changes.

Is the test accurate?

No diagnostic test is 100% accurate. Your doctor will use the result along with a lot of other information to make the decision about your care and discuss this with you.

Are there any alternative tests?

There are a few blood tests that provide a result that looks at the proteins involved with pre-eclampsia, along with measuring your blood pressure and any protein that might be in your urine. Other than these it's important to notice any symptoms associated with pre-eclampsia such as headaches, swelling, visual disturbance.

How long will the test take?

Your blood will be taken and sent to the laboratory, it will take about 1-2 hours for your doctor to get the results back. You may be asked to wait or sent home and the doctor will contact you later with the results and any advice needed.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

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