UK NSC bacterial vaginosis recommendation

Following a review of the evidence against strict criteria, the UK NSC does not currently recommend universal screening for bacterial vaginosis in pregnancy.

Bacterial vaginosis is the most common cause of abnormal vaginal discharge. Although the condition is generally not serious, it has been suggested that it can lead to complications during pregnancy, such as premature birth.

Screening for bacterial vaginosis in pregnancy to prevent preterm labour has been of interest to researchers for many years and is reviewed as part of the UK NSC’s review cycle.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

• The available evidence is limited and could not demonstrate that the presence or absence of bacterial vaginosis could accurately identify which women would suffer complications, specifically preterm labour, and which would not.

• There is no agreement on whether the recognised treatment, antibiotics, is actually effective in reducing the risk of premature birth. The research is conflicting with some studies showing antibiotics have no effect, while others show a positive effect or even a negative effect on the rate of preterm labour or the health of the baby.

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations on screening for different conditions in the light of new research evidence becoming available.

To find out more about the UK NSC’s bacterial vaginosis recommendation, please visit:

www.screening.nhs.uk/bacterialvaginosis

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) is chaired by the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, advises Ministers and the NHS in the four UK countries about all aspects of screening and supports implementation of screening programmes. Using research evidence, pilot programmes and economic evaluation, it assesses the evidence for programmes against a set of internationally recognised criteria covering the condition, the test, the treatment options and the effectiveness and acceptability of the screening programme. Assessing programmes in this way is intended to ensure that they do more good than harm at a reasonable cost. The UK NSC also sets up practical mechanisms to oversee the introduction of new programmes in the English NHS and monitors effectiveness and quality of these programmes.

Find out more about the UK National Screening Committee at www.screening.nhs.uk. The UK NSC evidence review process is described at www.screening.nhs.uk/evidencereview and a list of all UK NSC recommendations can be found at www.screening.nhs.uk/recommendations

The UK NSC is supported by Public Health England (www.gov.uk/phe).