UK NSC recommendation on Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy

Following a review of the evidence, the UK NSC does not recommend a national population based screening programme for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD).

DMD is a muscle wasting condition that mainly affects boys. The condition is most commonly detected around the age of 5 years old when the muscles become weaker as the child gets older. Physical activities such as running, jumping and climbing become more difficult and falling can become more frequent.

It has been suggested that offering screening, using the newborn heel prick blood spot to measure the levels of a protein (creatine kinase or CK), might help identify babies with DMD.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

The review found that:

- the test misses some babies who have DMD. Some babies are also falsely identified as having the condition, when they do not
- currently babies and children are treated once the condition is diagnosed. It is not clear that earlier treatment (such as would be possible following a newborn screening test) would be of benefit to the child’s health
- there is no clear view on whether parents wish for the disease to be diagnosed in the newborn period. Some would like the diagnosis to take place in the newborn period. But others would like this to happen later in childhood to allow time with the child without the knowledge that they would become ill

The review did find that there are new drugs being tested in boys with DMD. However research into these drugs was at an early stage. The review also found a report of a new approach to screening but this too was at an early stage. More information may become available by the time of the UK NSC’s next review.

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 DMD recommendation, please visit:

[legacyscreening.phe.org.uk/musculardystrophy](http://legacyscreening.phe.org.uk/musculardystrophy)