

UK NSC asymptomatic bacteriuria (ASB) recommendation

Following a review of the evidence against strict criteria, the UK NSC does not currently recommend introducing a national screening programme for asymptomatic bacteriuria (ASB).

ASB is a urinary tract infection (UTI) with no symptoms.

In pregnant women, if left untreated this can cause a kidney infection. For mothers this can cause fever, breathing difficulties and kidney failure. This can also cause problems for the baby such as being born prematurely, of low birth weight or in some rare cases, being stillborn.

It has been suggested that offering routine screening would help prevent pregnant women developing a kidney infection.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

Women are tested for ASB in early pregnancy. However a national screening programme for ASB is not recommended by the UK NSC because:

- it is not known how many women and babies are affected
- the best way of screening pregnant women, for example, when or how often to screen throughout pregnancy is not known
- although antibiotics can prevent kidney infection the best way of treating women, for example, with a single dose or a short course, is not known
- the benefit of screening over and above the current testing process is uncertain

Clinicians seeking guidance in the routine care of pregnant women should use the NICE clinical practice guidelines.

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 asymptomatic bacteriuria recommendation, please visit:

legacyscreening.phe.org.uk/asymptomaticbacteriuria

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises ministers and the NHS in the 4 UK countries about all aspects of screening and supports implementation of screening programmes.

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

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