

UK NSC hepatitis C screening in pregnancy recommendation

Following a review of the evidence against strict criteria, the UK NSC does not currently recommend introducing a national screening programme for the hepatitis C virus in pregnancy.

Hepatitis C is a virus that spreads through contact with infected blood or other body fluids. This could be during a blood transfusion, tattooing, body piercing or when injecting drugs. Hepatitis C is a major global health problem affecting 2% to 3% of the world's population. People can live with hepatitis C for many years without any symptoms.. Between 1% and 5% develop a liver cancer.

Hepatitis C in pregnancy can increase the risk of pregnancy complications and miscarriage. The main cause of hepatitis C infection in children is transfer of the virus from mother to child. In about 20% of these children the infection clears without treatment. In 80% of children the infection continues into adulthood.

A national screening programme would aim to find pregnant women with hepatitis C to prevent pregnancy complications and reduce the risk of passing the virus to the child.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

There is uncertainty about:

- the number of pregnant women in the UK who have hepatitis C
- the factors that increase the risk of a mother transferring the hepatitis C virus to their child
- the accuracy of screening tests for hepatitis C in pregnant women
- the effectiveness of treatments for pregnant women with hepatitis C and their children
- the ability of the drugs to prevent the baby catching hepatitis C from the mother in the womb

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 hepatitis C screening in pregnancy recommendation, please visit:

<https://legacyscreening.phe.org.uk/hepatitisc-pregnancy>

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).