



UK NSC antenatal screening for cystic fibrosis recommendation

Following a review of the evidence against strict criteria, the UK NSC does not currently recommend antenatal screening for cystic fibrosis.

Cystic fibrosis is an inherited disease. It is caused by faulty genes passed on from both parents. If someone has only one faulty gene they are called 'carriers'. Carriers are not usually affected by cystic fibrosis.

When people are affected, cystic fibrosis causes a thick, sticky mucus to build up in the body's organs. The lungs, pancreas and digestive system are the organs which are most often damaged. Some people affected by cystic fibrosis can have very serious health issues. For others, the effects are more manageable.

In the UK, babies are tested for cystic fibrosis as part of the newborn blood spot screening programme. There is no cure for cystic fibrosis but screening makes it possible to offer treatments which can help reduce the effects of the condition.

Screening all women during pregnancy is not offered in most countries. It would be different to newborn screening. It would involve testing the parents to see if they are carriers of the faulty genes. The fetus could then be tested to see if 2 faulty genes have been passed on. The parents would then have a choice of whether or not to continue the pregnancy.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

The review found that screening during pregnancy would be very difficult. There are many faulty genes which might cause cystic fibrosis. But many of these have not been studied. This makes it difficult to know which ones to look for through screening.

No research on screening has taken place in the UK since the early 1990s. This means there is no new evidence to support screening all women during pregnancy.

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 antenatal screening for cystic fibrosis recommendation, please visit:

<https://legacyscreening.phe.org.uk/cysticfibrosis-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).