

When we need to do a specialist scan of your unborn baby's heart

Fetal Cardiology

Information for Patients

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Introduction

You have been referred to the **Fetal Cardiology Service**. This is to have a detailed ultrasound scan of your baby's heart (fetal echocardiogram). This leaflet explains about the scan, the team and what happens after you have had the scan.

The Fetal Cardiology Service is run by the East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre (EMCHC) . It is based at the Leicester Royal Infirmary Maternity Unit. The main neonatal and special care baby units are also here.

You will be seen in clinic by members of our team such as a fetal cardiologist, fetal medicine doctor, specialist cardiac nurse and specialist midwife.

Why have I been referred for a fetal heart scan?

Some babies are more at risk of being born with a heart problem. They will need more detailed heart scanning than the usual screening. Some of these can be done by local advanced screening sonographers or fetal medicine teams but some people will need to come to Leicester for a fetal cardiology review.

Reasons for more detailed heart scans can include:

- When there is concern your baby's heart may not be normal.
- When there is concern your baby's heart rhythm may not be normal.
- A family history of important congenital heart disease (parent, previous child or immediate relative).
- If you have diabetes that has been difficult to control.

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- When you are taking certain medications such as anti-epileptic medicine.
- When a genetic test has been done and the result is abnormal.

What is a fetal heart scan (echocardiogram)?

- A fetal heart scan is usually done between 18 to 23 weeks of pregnancy. In some cases it may be done earlier.
- The scan is like the routine scans you will have during pregnancy.
- We use ultrasound to take pictures of the heart. This allows us to see how it is developing and how the blood flows around it.
- About 1 in every 100 babies is born with some form of heart abnormality.
- Fetal heart scanning can find most problems (structural abnormalities) of the heart and changes in the rhythm of the heart but not all. Some cannot be seen or picked up until after your baby is born.
- Some of these abnormalities are minor differences from the normal heart. They will have little or no long term effect on your baby. Others are more serious or complicated, with life-long effects.
- The length of time for the scan can vary. Sometimes our clinics are busy and can run late. We know this adds to your stress. We will do our best to make sure you are seen as quickly as possible, but please try to be patient with us.
- There may be some people in the room during your scan: a fetal cardiologist, fetal medicine specialist, a trainee cardiac or fetal medicine doctor, specialist nurse or midwife. We will check that you are happy for these people to be in the room during your scan.
- Do not panic if the doctor doing the scan is quiet, they need to concentrate and look at all the parts of the heart. They will explain everything to you once they have all the information needed.
- If they are not able to get clear views of the heart, you may be asked to have a walk around the department to urge the baby to move.
- The doctor scanning may talk to a colleague as they are scanning, please do not be alarmed by this. They are making sure they have all the information they need.
- The fetal medicine doctor may also do part of the scan to check the rest of your baby.

After the scan

We will always tell you of our findings at the end of the scan. If a problem is found, we will explain what this is and what it means.

Most heart problems do not cause any problems whilst in the womb. Some may never need more treatment but some may need quite complicated treatment. This will be explained as clearly as possible. Please talk to us if you have any questions.

Some babies with heart problems that are present from birth (congenital heart disease) will have a problem with other organs or a genetic problem that is causing problems with more than just the heart. Our team will offer advice and counselling and refer you for further scans or tests if needed.

Many people need time to think things through. It is advisable to go home and think about all the information you have been given before making any plans.

No one will **tell** you what you need to do. This is a very personal choice. It will often be very different for different people and situations. We will give you as much information as we can and, along with your local team to support your decisions.

Contact details

If you wish to talk to one of the team before your appointment, please contact:

Fetal & Children's Cardiac Nurse Specialists

Tel: 0116 256 3338

Email: uhl-tr.fetalcardiacnursespecialists@nhs.net

Fetal Cardiac Coordinator

Tel: 0116 258 4860

Email: uhl-tr.fcardiac@nhs.net



اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

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