

Routine pregnancy tests carried out before a planned operation/procedure for female patients

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about having a routine pregnancy test before your operation/procedure. It explains why this is necessary for all female patients who are 12 years old and above. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Why do I need a pregnancy test before my operation/procedure?

All women who are old enough to have children need to have the same pregnancy test before they have an operation or procedure.

When a female is old enough to have children, making sure that pregnancy has been considered before their operation is an important part of preparing them for surgery. This reduces the risk of harm to the woman and their unborn child. It is supported by the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), organisations that give hospitals guidance on how to provide the best patient care.

What are the benefits of pre-operation/procedure pregnancy testing?

We have to tell all females who are old enough to have children about the risks of surgery and anaesthesia to themselves and an unborn baby. One of the risks of an operation may be possible harm to an unborn child if we don't know about the pregnancy beforehand.

If the test shows that you are pregnant, the risks and benefits of your operation can be discussed with you. Operations and procedures may be postponed or delayed, or the anaesthetic and the way the operation is done can be changed if necessary. In emergency situations, confirmation of pregnancy should not delay treatment and the potential risks will be assessed by the medical team caring for you.

What are the risks of undetected pregnancy during my operation?

Although very rare, incidents have been reported nationally where miscarriage (losing the baby) has occurred after an operation.

Asking for your consent

We want to involve you in all the decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to refuse a pregnancy test your team may postpone the surgery or procedure, or they will try to ensure you understand the risks to you or an unborn baby before your treatment continues.

What happens during the pre-operation pregnancy testing?

A small sample of urine provided by you will be used for the pregnancy test. The test will be done by one of the nurses looking after you.

What happens if the result is positive?

The pregnancy testing kits used at Evelina London have a proven accuracy of more than 99%. Some medicines can affect the reliability of the pregnancy test, and a further test by the pathology laboratory at the hospital may be requested to confirm results.

If the test result is positive, you will be able to discuss this with your nurse or doctor. A decision that is best for you and the unborn baby can be discussed and made with you and your medical team, and if appropriate, with your family. The staff will support you and be able to direct you for expert advice and help about what to do next.

Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any worries, questions or concerns about anything you have read in this leaflet please ask any of the doctors or nurses caring for you and they will be happy to help.

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

t: 020 7188 3003 10am to 5pm, Monday to Friday **e:** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health. **w:** www.nhs.uk

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