This information is for you if your fetal anomaly scan has shown that your baby has ventriculomegaly

The information applies if ventriculomegaly was the only unexpected finding on the scan.

Every pregnant woman in Wales is offered a fetal anomaly scan when they are between 18 and 20 weeks pregnant. The scan is a way of checking that your baby appears to be developing as expected. This means it may show up unexpected findings that would then need to be checked by further tests.

Ventriculomegaly

Ventriculomegaly is found in approximately 1 in every 1,000 (0.1%) pregnancies in Wales.

What is ventriculomegaly?

Ventricles are normal spaces within the baby's brain which are filled with liquid (cerebrospinal fluid, or CSF) which acts as a 'cushion' for the brain and also provides nutrients to the brain.

Normally the ventricles are less than 10.1 millimetres (mm) wide. When they measure 10.1mm or more, this is known as ventriculomegaly. This can be caused by too much fluid being produced in the brain.

In Wales, when ventriculomegaly is the only unexpected finding seen on the fetal anomaly scan, about 5 in every 10 babies (50%) are born with no other health conditions.

For the remaining 5 in every 10 babies (50%), further tests may find a cause. On average:

- 4 in every 10 babies (40%) have a condition with their brain which may delay their development, and
- 1 out of 10 pregnancies (10%) with ventriculomegaly will have a chromosomal condition.

Occasionally, infections such as cytomegalovirus (CMV), toxoplasmosis and rubella (German measles) are associated with ventriculomegaly. In Wales from 2011 to 2020, there were five recorded cases of CMV linked with ventriculomegaly, one case of toxoplasmosis and no known cases of German measles.

What will happen next?

You will be seen by a midwife who specialises in antenatal screening or your hospital doctor (obstetrician) who will explain what care you will be offered next.

Because of these findings you will be offered an appointment with a fetal medicine consultant. This appointment may or may not be at the hospital where you are booked to deliver your baby.

At this appointment the midwife and doctor will explain more about the conditions and about the tests you can have and how they are done. Some women decide not to have these tests. The midwife and doctor will support whatever choice you make. You may have questions to ask the midwife or doctor and may want to have another appointment. You may want your partner or another person to come with you for support. You may want more time to think before you decide what to do next.

You may want to think about what you might do if the test result shows your baby has one of the conditions. Some women will want to prepare themselves for the birth knowing that their baby has been shown to have a condition. Other women may decide to end the pregnancy if a poor outcome is expected.

What tests will I be offered?

- **A blood test**

You will be offered a blood test to see if you have recently had CMV, toxoplasmosis or rubella (German measles). If the blood test shows you have had any of these infections, there is a small chance the infection may pass across the afterbirth and infect your baby. If your baby is infected with any of the above it may cause issues such as low birth weight, jaundice, hearing loss, sight loss and heart conditions.

- **Amniocentesis**

You will be offered an amniocentesis if you want to know before your baby's birth if the ventriculomegaly is because of a chromosomal change.

An amniocentesis is a very accurate way of telling whether your baby does or does not have these conditions.

An amniocentesis carries an additional risk of miscarriage which is likely to be below 0.5% (or 1 in 200 pregnancies). The miscarriage can be the loss of a baby that was affected or unaffected by the conditions being tested for.

If your blood test has shown that you have had a recent infection, an amniocentesis will also tell if your baby is infected by CMV, toxoplasmosis or rubella (German measles).

You can get more information about amniocentesis on the Antenatal Screening Wales web page '[Information on further tests for suspected chromosomal or genetic conditions]'.

- **MRI scan of your baby's brain**

You will be offered an MRI scan of your baby's brain. This will give more information about how your baby's brain is developing.

Further information

You can get more information from the hospital midwife who specialises in antenatal screening or your hospital doctor (obstetrician).

Smoking

Protecting your baby from tobacco smoke is one of the best things you can do to give them a healthy start in life. It can be difficult to stop smoking, but it is never too late to quit. Find information and support at Help Me Quit.

Information from CARIS (Congenital Anomaly Register and Information System) and The Welsh Study of Mothers and Babies has been used in this leaflet to describe how ventriculomegaly may present in your baby.

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Crystal Mark 22774
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