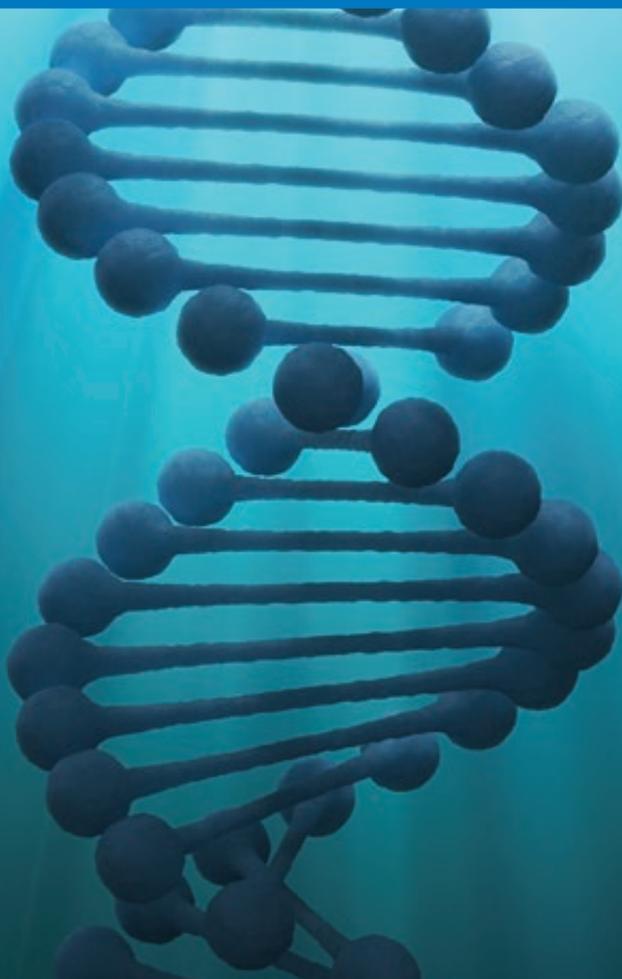


Chorionic villus sampling (CVS)

Information for patients



This leaflet tells you about the chorionic villus sampling (CVS) test. It involves taking a sample of cells called chorionic villi, which are found in the developing placenta (afterbirth).

This test is not offered to everyone. It is normally used to test for specific genetic disorders, and in some instances it may be used to detect Down's syndrome.

Why it is used

The final decision about having any test in pregnancy is yours. You may wish to consider CVS if you:

- have been identified as at high risk of having a child with a genetic disorder
- have had a high risk result from routine screening (combined screening, triple screening and/or nuchal translucency screening).

When it is used

The test is most safely performed from the 11th week of pregnancy until the end of the 13th week of pregnancy. In urgent cases, CVS can be performed after this time.

Risks

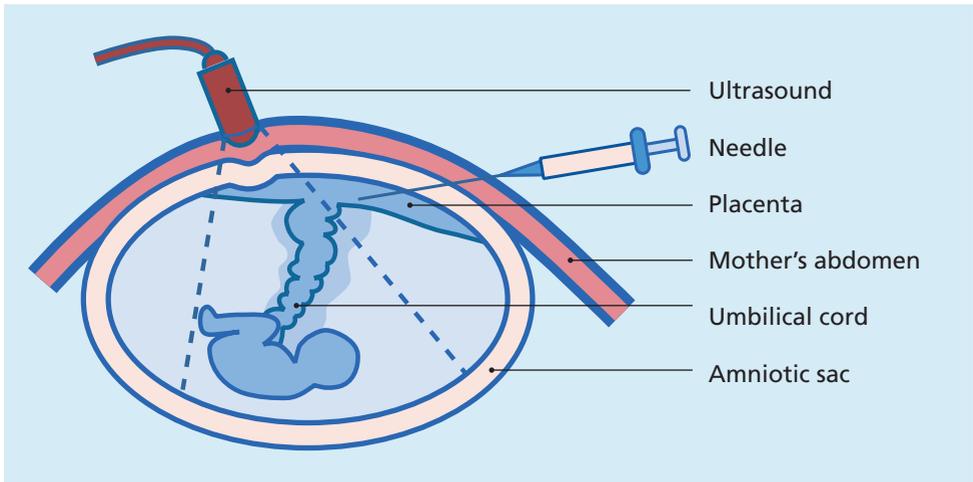
The CVS test has been available for a number of years, so we know a lot about its safety and accuracy.

We know that the test can sometimes cause a miscarriage (loss of the pregnancy). Clinical research and our experience indicate that 1-2 women in every 100 who have the test will miscarry as a result of the procedure, and we don't really know why this happens.

No test is absolutely perfect, but the CVS test is very reliable. It fails to give a clear result in fewer than one in 100 cases. If you are having the CVS test for non-chromosomal reasons, your genetic doctor or counsellor will be able to give you more advice about the accuracy of the test.

How the test is performed

Before the test is done, an ultrasound scan is carried out to check the baby's age in weeks and the position of the baby and the placenta (afterbirth).



There are two ways of doing the CVS test. The doctor doing the test chooses the method that he/she thinks is the most appropriate for you, and this will depend on the position of the placenta (afterbirth).

1. Through the abdomen (transabdominal)

Your abdomen above the uterus (womb) is cleaned with antiseptic solution, and a local anaesthetic is given to numb the area. A fine needle is then passed through the wall of the womb into the chorionic tissue. Ultrasound is used to help the doctor to guide the needle into the right place. A small sample of chorionic tissue is removed through the needle and sent to the laboratory for testing.

2. Through the neck of the womb (transcervical)

Your vagina is cleaned with antiseptic solution and a pair of fine forceps is then passed through the cervix (neck of the womb).

Ultrasound is used to help the doctor to guide the forceps to the right place. A small sample of chorionic tissue is removed and sent to the laboratory for testing. With each method, only a very small amount of the placenta is removed, measuring about the size of a few grains of rice.

Is the test painful?

Most women describe it as being uncomfortable rather than painful and say it feels similar to period pain. Generally women say the thought of it is worse than the actual test.

Some say that the transcervical method feels like having a smear test done or having a coil fitted. Most women having the transabdominal test say they are aware of a pushing feeling and some soreness over the area afterwards.

Occasionally, it's not possible to perform a CVS on the day of the appointment due to either the position of the placenta or the womb.

After the test

You will probably be at the hospital for about 45 minutes, but the test itself only takes about 15 to 20 minutes. We encourage you to bring a companion with you for support during and after the test. Afterwards, we suggest that you stay in the clinic for about half an hour to let things settle down before going home. It is a good idea to take things easy for a couple of days, avoiding any heavy lifting or strenuous exercise.

It is not unusual to have some "spotting" for a few hours after the test. You may feel a little sore or get some discomfort rather like period pain. This should settle after rest and with paracetamol, which is safe to take in pregnancy. If you have excessive pain, are leaking any fluid, or bleeding, or develop a high temperature, please contact your midwife, GP or local hospital.

Results

The chromosome test involves growing the cells in the laboratory and this usually takes about two weeks.

We will contact you by telephone as soon as the results become available and give you the opportunity to discuss the findings. We will notify your own hospital and GP of the results.

If you are having a CVS test done for a less common genetic problem, you need to talk to your genetic doctor or counsellor about how long the results will take, as this varies depending upon the information required and how you would like to be informed of the result.

Very occasionally the test may not be successful and another test will be needed to give you a full result. However, you will be able to have a full discussion about this.

Diagnosis

If the results show anything abnormal, you will be told what the abnormality is and how this could affect your baby. You would have a chance to discuss the results fully before making any decisions.

HIV infection

At the moment our laboratory facilities and current health and safety law limit the tests we can perform on samples from women who are known to be HIV positive.

There may be a small risk that the CVS test could cause the HIV virus to be passed to the developing baby. In these circumstances it may be possible for women to have an alternative test called an amniocentesis. We encourage women who are HIV positive to discuss this with their specialist midwife or doctor to obtain further information.

Your questions

When you come to your CVS appointment you will have the opportunity to discuss the test fully before making a final decision on whether to go ahead. We recognise that everyone will have their own particular questions and concerns to discuss.

Further information

If you need more advice about any aspect of the CVS test, please contact us at:

- **Wessex Clinical Genetics Service**

Princess Anne Hospital
Coxford Road
Southampton
SO16 5YA

Telephone: **023 8120 6170**

Website: **www.uhs.nhs.uk/genetics**

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**If you need a translation of this document,
an interpreter or a version in large print,
Braille or on audiotape, please telephone
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