Nuchal Translucency – 11-13 Weeks

What is the Nuchal Translucency Scan?

The majority of babies are born normal. However, all women, whatever their age, have a small risk of delivering a baby with a physical and/or mental handicap.

The risk of having a baby with such an abnormality can be calculated on the basis of maternal age, the amount of fluid behind the baby's neck, the length of the baby and 2 hormones in your blood. You and your partner can then decide if the risk of the baby having Down's Syndrome is acceptable or if you would like to have an invasive test such as a CVS or amniocentesis. These two tests carry a miscarriage rate of 1%. As a guideline, an invasive test is usually offered if the risk of Down's Syndrome is 1 in 300 or above.

During the scan, several measurements are taken:

- The crown rump length (CRL) from the top of the baby's head to the bottom of the spine. This will enable us to accurately calculate how pregnant you are and the estimated date of delivery
- The fetal heart rate
- The nuchal translucency measurement (NT). This is the fluid filled space behind the neck that is present in all fetuses.

The fetal anatomy will also be examined, as there are some physical abnormalities that can be diagnosed at this stage of pregnancy. We will examine the skull and brain, nasal bone, the arms, legs, stomach, spine and abdomen.

The accuracy of this test is increased by measuring the level of two hormones in the Mother's blood (Beta HCG and Papp-A)

Results of the Scan

After the scan, on the basis of all the above factors, the estimated risk for Down's Syndrome will be discussed with you. Only you can then decide if you wish to have an invasive diagnostic test.

Irrespective of whether or not you decide to have an invasive test, it is recommended that you have a scan at 20 weeks to check for physical abnormalities.

A written report will be sent to your Obstetrician or GP. If you require an amniocentesis or CVS, we can arrange for you to be counselled about this and the procedures performed by one of our Fetal Medicine Consultants.