

12-week pregnancy check

What has happened before I'm 12 weeks pregnant?

If you think that you could be pregnant, you should go to your GP or health care centre so they can do a blood or wee test to confirm that you're pregnant and do a health check.

They will talk with you about your options for care, and you can decide if you want most of your pregnancy (antenatal) care to be:

- In the community with a GP and midwife
- In the community/hospital antenatal clinic with a midwifery group
- In the hospital with a midwife and women's health specialist (obstetrician). This option is good if you need extra support during your pregnancy because of medical issues.

Your GP will also organise these blood tests:

- Full blood count – checking your red blood cells, which carry oxygen around your body and to baby. We check your white blood cells to make sure you have a strong immune system.
- Blood group & antibodies – knowing your blood group allows for a blood transfusion if you need it, and your antibodies show if you have special proteins that can potentially affect your baby. Once we know your antibodies, we can take steps to protect your baby if we need to.
- Iron studies – check your iron levels and see if you need iron tablets
- Rubella – to know if you are immune to German measles. If you got German measles while pregnant, it might cause problems with the baby.
- Hepatitis B – if positive, your baby might need an infusion after birth, so it doesn't pass to them
- RPR – checking for syphilis, which could be passed to your baby
- HIV & Hepatitis C – these tests are not compulsory but are recommended. Both HIV and Hepatitis C can cause problems in your growing baby.

Your GP may also send you for a dating scan if you're unsure how far along you are or when you got pregnant.

What will happen when I'm 12 weeks pregnant

When you are between 11 and 13 weeks pregnant, your GP or midwife will organise for you to have two tests:

- An ultrasound scan – here they measure a fluid-filled space at the back of your baby's neck
- Blood test – measuring your pregnancy hormone (bHCG) and a protein level called PAPP-A.

Why am I doing these tests?

The combined results of the ultrasound scan and the blood test will tell you if you have a high or low risk of having a baby with Down Syndrome or other genetic abnormalities.

You need to get both of these tests to give you an accurate result. The risk level is also affected by:

- Your age
- How far along in your pregnancy you are
- The appearance of the baby's nasal bone.

What do the test results mean?

The results will be given as a chance of having a baby with the genetic abnormality:

- Low risk means your baby is in the low-risk category and is unlikely to have a genetic condition
- High risk means your baby is in a higher risk category of having a genetic condition. High risk doesn't mean that they have it, but they might so you will need further tests to make sure.

Your doctor or midwife will sit down and explain your results to you. If your baby is at a higher risk, your doctor will talk to you about other tests to look at your baby's genetics more closely.

What's next?

The next investigation in an uncomplicated pregnancy is the 20-week ultrasound scan if you decide to have it.

