



Guy's and St Thomas'  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Preterm surveillance clinic



showing  
we **care**

## Why have I been referred?

The preterm surveillance clinic aims to provide extra care for women who may have a higher risk of having a baby born too early. This can be for a number of reasons, such as:

- previous birth before 34 weeks
- previous late miscarriage
- the 'waters' (amniotic sac) have broken before 34 weeks in a previous pregnancy
- previous surgery to the cervix after an abnormal smear test
- an unusually shaped womb (uterus)
- women expecting more than one baby.

Often we will see you in the clinic two or three times to be able to reassure you that your pregnancy is progressing well and then discharge you from the clinic around 24 weeks of pregnancy.

Sometimes we may think it is useful to monitor you more regularly and we may be able to offer you treatments that reduce the risk of preterm birth.

## Appointments in the clinic

The preterm surveillance clinic is held on Wednesdays in the Fetal Medicine Unit, 8th floor, North Wing, St Thomas' Hospital.

## What will happen when I visit the clinic?

- You will usually speak with a midwife who will ask about your history and discuss your personalised plan of care.
- You may be offered a transvaginal ultrasound scan of your cervix, where an ultrasound probe is placed into the vagina. Your bladder should be empty for this scan.
- If you are over 18 weeks pregnant, you may also be offered a vaginal swab test (fetal fibronectin) to help predict your risk of an early birth. This is done with a speculum and then a swab (like a cotton bud) is placed in the vagina for a few seconds. Your swab result is usually ready after 10-25 minutes.
- Sometimes emergencies and unexpected events can increase waiting times. We appreciate your patience and will keep you informed if delays occur.

There are some things which make the swab test less reliable. We recommend that you avoid the following for two days before you attend the clinic:

- sexual intercourse
- vaginal douching (this involves flushing the vagina with water for the purpose of cleaning).

## When to seek advice

Sometimes there are signs that you may be going into labour. Often the signs may not lead to preterm labour but it is important to let your midwife know so you can get advice.

These signs may include:

- period-like pains or cramps which come and go
- fluid leaking from the vagina
- bleeding from the vagina.

If you think you may be in labour, do not wait for your next appointment in the preterm surveillance clinic. Call the Maternity Assessment Unit (MAU) **immediately**, t: 020 7188 1723 or 020 7188 1722.

## Should I still attend my antenatal appointments?

Yes. You should attend all other antenatal appointments in addition to visiting us.

The preterm surveillance clinic is extra care for women more likely to have a preterm birth. It does not replace any other care you have.

## Research in the clinic

There is much that is still unknown about the causes, best management and prevention of preterm birth. The clinic is dedicated to enhancing knowledge in the hope to establish an evidence based approach to care.

You may be eligible for one, or more, research projects going on in the clinic. You may be approached and asked to consider taking part. Taking part is voluntary, and will not affect your maternity care, but may help care for women in the future. If you would like information on the current research projects underway please do not hesitate to contact us between 9am-5pm on **t:** 020 7188 3570 or **t:** 020 7188 3634.

## Useful sources of information

**Tommy's:** Funding research into stillbirth, premature birth and miscarriage – providing information for parents to be.

**w:** [www.tommys.org](http://www.tommys.org)

**t:** 020 7398 3400

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your referral, please contact the research midwives on **t:** 020 7188 3570, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.

For more leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit, **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

## 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](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

**e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

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A list of sources is available on request