



PATIENT INFORMATION

# PREOPERATIVE PREGNANCY TESTING



## **Preoperative Pregnancy Testing**

### **Why do we need to know if you are pregnant?**

When you need an operation or investigation that needs us to put you to sleep for a little while (a general anaesthetic), we will have to ask you lots of questions about your health, any medicines you might be taking and any allergies you have. This is so we can make sure that you will be safe in hospital. We also need to be sure that you are not pregnant, as planned surgery is best avoided during pregnancy (in the majority of cases). This is particularly important if you will also need x-rays to be taken while you are anaesthetised.

Very soon after becoming pregnant (a woman's period may only be a week or two late), there are many changes happening within the body. How drugs affect the body, and how the body deals with drugs can be different during pregnancy. Some drugs that are sometimes used during anaesthesia may damage an unborn baby and are best avoided. There is also a chance of miscarriage (losing the baby) if a woman has an operation or investigation during early pregnancy.

### **How will we ask about pregnancy?**

If you think that you are, or could be pregnant, please let a member of the preoperative medical team know; either before, or when you are being admitted for surgery.

When you are admitted you will be asked about pregnancy. We also routinely test a urine sample for all women aged 12-55 years for pregnancy. This won't detect very early pregnancy so please tell us if you think you could be pregnant.

You don't have to provide a sample, but without a negative test the surgical team will need to have a further discussion with you about the surgery and whether you should have it that day.

For certain types of operation, i.e. gynaecological procedures or operations requiring X-rays to your pelvis, you may be asked more detailed questions by the surgical team to see if you could be in a very early stage of pregnancy (which might not be detectable by a pregnancy test).

### **Is it the same for girls under 16?**

All girls aged 12-16 years or their parents will be asked to give consent to provide a sample of urine for a pregnancy test. This has no relation to individual circumstances. Although there may only be a very small/tiny number of pregnancies in this age group, we believe that testing all patients is the most effective way of avoiding the risk of harm.

We have to test girls even if they tell us they are not sexually active or have not had their first period. We hope you will understand that it is better to test every female patient within an age range rather than try to discriminate by asking personal questions.

### **What happens with the result?**

All women over the age of 16 should be told their test result on the day of surgery.

For girls aged 16 and under it is more complicated, and depends on the girl's maturity. We may not be able to tell a parent/guardian the result without her consent – please do not ask the staff for the result.

If a positive result is found in a girl aged 16 and under we will inform her (and her parent/guardian if appropriate), the surgical team who will need to make a decision regarding the surgery, and the Trust child safeguarding team.

### **Does anyone not need to be tested?**

If you have had a hysterectomy (womb removed) or bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy (both tubes and ovaries removed) then you will not need to provide a urine sample. Tubal ligation (tubes tied) can fail and so you would still need a pregnancy test.

**If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.**

## **Patient Experience**

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

## **Feedback**

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

## **How to contact PALS:**

**Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: [wah-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:wah-tr.PET@nhs.net)**

## **Opening times:**

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.