Echogenic bowel on ultrasound scan
What is echogenic bowel?
An ultrasound scan of your baby has shown that your baby has echogenic bowel. ‘Echogenic bowel’ is the term used to describe the appearance of the baby’s bowel. It means that it appears brighter than usual.

What does this mean?

In most cases the cause is never found and it often disappears.

One of the known reasons for echogenic bowel is an early bleed in the pregnancy (which you may not have been aware of). Echogenic bowel may be caused by the baby swallowing some blood in the amniotic fluid. This is not harmful to the baby.

Echogenic bowel can be associated with cystic fibrosis. Cystic fibrosis is a serious inherited disease which affects the lungs and digestion. It affects both boys and girls equally and means that they will need to have lifelong treatment.

We offer to take blood from both parents to check if either of you are a carrier of the cystic fibrosis gene. Around 3% of babies who have echogenic bowel at the anomaly scan are found to have cystic fibrosis and 97% do not. All newborn babies in the UK are screened for CF when they are born as part of the Newborn Bloodspot Screening.

Echogenic bowel can also be associated with an infection called cytomegalovirus (CMV). We will offer to take your blood and test to see if you have recently had this infection. CMV is a common virus that causes few symptoms in most people.
What happens next?

You will have a second scan carried out in the Fetal Medicine Unit. This will confirm the scan findings. If the echogenic bowel is seen in addition to anything else on the scan we will discuss these results with you. We may then offer further tests.

If no underlying cause is found for the echogenic bowel then a further scan will be arranged to check the baby’s growth later in your pregnancy.

The blood test results will take about a week to return. The Specialist Midwives will telephone you with the results and then send you a letter. They will arrange any further appointments you might need.

Contact details

We understand that this can be a worrying time for you and your baby’s father. If you have any questions or need any support please call the Fetal Medicine Unit.

Tel: 01865 221 716  9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

Further information

www.fetalanomaly.screening.nhs.uk

Information from the NHS about the fetal anomaly scan, including helpful leaflets and advice.

www.cysticfibrosis.org.uk

UK Trust website with information about cystic fibrosis and local support for parents.
If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221 473 or email PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk