



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

COMMON PROCEDURES

Information for
parents and carers



Oxford Newborn Care Unit

During their time in the Oxford Newborn Care Unit your baby may need to have certain tests and procedures.

Most of these procedures will be part of your baby's routine care. However, there are some procedures which we may need your consent for. We will try to inform you of these procedures in advance, but in some emergency situations this may not be possible.

The medical team will weigh up the benefits and the risk of complications, and will always act in your baby's best interest. Please feel free to ask any member of the medical or nursing team about the advantages and risks of any test or procedure.

Heel prick

This is a common procedure and is the simplest way to collect a small sample of blood from a baby. It involves using a device to make a small pin prick on the baby's heel and collecting drops of blood for testing.

Blood tests

When your baby is admitted to the Newborn Care Unit, and throughout their stay, they may need to have certain blood tests. A full blood count (FBC) test will be carried out, which measures their number of red and white blood cells and other blood cells. This test can identify anaemia and infection.

Urea and electrolyte (U and E's) tests show the levels of certain salts within your baby's blood stream and can provide information about their kidneys, liver and heart.

Both of these blood tests are sent to the laboratory for testing.

Blood gas

A small blood sample collected from the heel prick can be used to measure your baby's oxygen and carbon dioxide levels (as well as some salts and blood glucose). This helps us to assess and adjust your baby's ventilation (breathing).

If your baby is in Intensive Care they may need frequent blood gas tests. There is a blood gas machine on the Oxford Newborn Care Unit, so results are available almost immediately.

Blood culture

This is a blood test to check for infection (bacterial or fungal) within the blood. It may take up to 48 hours for a result to be available.

Peripheral venous line (PVL)

This is a thin, plastic tube which is inserted into a vein to give medication or fluids.

Umbilical venous catheter (UVC)

This is a narrow, plastic tube which is put into the umbilical vein (in the belly button). It can be used in the first few days after your baby is born, to give them nutrition and medication.

Umbilical artery catheter (UAC)

This is a thin, plastic tube which is put into the umbilical artery (in the belly button). It is used to measure blood pressure for the first week after your baby is born. It can also be used to collect blood samples more easily.

Central venous line (CVL)

This is a soft, plastic tube, which is inserted into a large vein and used for intravenous nutrition, long courses of antibiotics and other medications. It may also be called a 'longline'.

Peripheral arterial line (PAL)

This is a narrow, plastic tube which is inserted into an artery, usually on the baby's arm or leg. It can be used to monitor your baby's blood pressure and to take blood samples more easily.

Nasogastric/orogastric tube (NGT/OGT)

This is a thin, plastic tube which is fed into the stomach through either the nose (naso) or mouth (oro). This can be used to give your baby nutrition (such as milk) and certain medications.

The nurse caring for your baby will pass (insert) the tube and carry out checks to make sure it is within the stomach. Many babies on the Newborn Care Unit will have a gastric tube. The tube will be changed regularly.

X-ray

This is a quick and painless procedure, commonly used to produce images of the inside of the body. X-rays can be used to look at the condition of your baby's lungs and their bowel, as well as to confirm certain tubes are in the right place.

Lumbar puncture (LP)

This is a procedure where a very fine needle is inserted between the bones of the lower back, into the fluid around the lower part of the spinal cord. This procedure is used to collect a sample of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) for examination in a laboratory, to see whether there is an infection.

Ultrasound scan (USS)

This is a procedure that uses high-frequency sound waves to create an image of the inside of part of the body. It uses a probe, which is rolled over the skin using a gel, in the same way as during ultrasound scans you may have had to look at your baby before they were born.

Ultrasound can be used to identify and monitor bleeding within a baby's brain; this is called cranial ultrasound. It can also be used to look at a baby's heart (an echocardiogram) and their bowel.

All of these ultrasounds can be carried out on the unit.

Occasionally babies need to be transferred to the Radiology department for other types of ultrasound.

Please speak to any member of the medical or nursing team if you have any further questions.

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Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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June 2021

Review: June 2024

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