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 be referred to the Fetal Medicine Unit (FMU). The FMU team will review your scan findings and are likely to offer you an additional scan to confirm these findings. The FMU midwives will be in touch with you by telephone to arrange an appointment.

The team will explore with you if the echogenic bowel is still present at this appointment, in addition to any other details on the scan and any relevant blood tests that can be offered to help identify the underlying cause of the echogenic bowel.

Based on any blood test and scan results, the team will decide if a follow up scan later in pregnancy is necessary. The FMU team will be in telephone contact with you.

Contact details

We understand that this can be a worrying time for you, your partner and your family. If you have any questions or need any support please call the Fetal Medicine Unit on the details below. However, please be reassured that the team need some time to review your referral and will be in touch with you as soon as possible.

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.
If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.