



Information for  
patients and  
carers

## Pre-eclampsia awareness

## What is a pre-eclampsia?

Pre-eclampsia is a condition which occurs only during pregnancy. It is diagnosed when there is a higher than normal blood pressure reading and protein in the urine sample. It is usually mild but sometimes it can become serious.

## How it affects you and your baby

As well as causing your blood pressure to be higher than normal and protein to be present in your urine, pre-eclampsia can result in the sudden swelling of your face, hands and feet. Some women also experience severe headaches, blurred vision or spots before their eyes.

Pre-eclampsia may cause your baby to grow slowly because he or she cannot get enough nutrients and oxygen from the placenta.

## Can it be treated?

Women with pre-eclampsia are monitored closely as the condition can become severe quickly. Even though you may feel perfectly well it may be necessary for you to attend the Maternity Day Unit for regular monitoring and sometimes hospital admission is necessary. Drugs can be given to help to control blood pressure but there is no cure for pre-eclampsia. Pre-eclampsia only gets better after your baby is born so it may be necessary to deliver your baby early.

## Am I at risk of getting pre-eclampsia?

No one can predict with certainty who will get pre-eclampsia. You are most at risk if:

- it is your first pregnancy

- a close female blood relative has had pre-eclampsia (your mother may know the disease as toxemia)
- you are over 40
- you have a BMI (Body Mass Index) of 35 or more
- you have a twin (or more) pregnancy
- you suffer from high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney disease or migraine
- you have had pre-eclampsia in a previous pregnancy

## Why do I have to come to clinic?

Routine antenatal checks are important no matter how well you feel. Your blood pressure will be checked against previous readings and your urine will be tested for protein. Occasionally if the midwife or doctor are concerned you are developing pre-eclampsia they may do a special blood test to determine if you are at risk.

A rise in blood pressure and protein in your urine can be an early warning sign that pre-eclampsia is developing although you may be unaware that there is anything wrong.

Early diagnosis of pre-eclampsia is important so that your baby can be closely monitored.

## Problems to be aware of

For most women who develop pre-eclampsia the illness remains mild. However, it can get worse quickly and it can be dangerous.

Never ignore any of the following:

- bad headaches that don't go away
- problems with your vision: blurring, flashing lights, spots before the eyes

- severe pain under your ribs
- sudden swelling of your hands, face or legs

**See your midwife or doctor immediately**

## Can I do anything to prevent pre-eclampsia?

At the moment there is no proven connection between lifestyle and pre-eclampsia, so it is vital to understand that you cannot do anything to prevent or cause the disease.

Pre-eclampsia cannot be brought on by working too hard, staying up too late, worrying or not putting your feet up enough.

Rest or relaxation cannot cure it.

Pre-eclampsia can only be detected by routine antenatal checks.

## Your future health

Pre- eclampsia recurs in approximately 25% of future pregnancies.

You should be offered low dose Aspirin in future pregnancies as this can help pre-eclampsia from recurring.

Women who have had a pregnancy complicated by pre-eclampsia are more likely to develop high blood pressure in later life. You may wish to discuss how you can reduce the risk of future blood pressure problems with your GP.

## Contact details

Should you require further advice or you are concerned about pre-eclampsia please contact:

Maternity Day Unit, Sharoe Green Unit on **01772 524776**.

Maternity triage (24 hours), Sharoe Green Unit on **01772 524495**

## Sources of further information

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

[www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)

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Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

**Cantonese:**

如果你希望以另外一種格式接收該資訊，請和我們聯絡，不必猶豫。

**Gujarati:**

જો તમને આ માહિતી બીજી રચના કે ફોર્મેટમાં મેળવવાની ઇચ્છા હોય, તો કૃપા કરી અમારો સંપર્ક કરતા અચકાશો નહિ.

**Hungarian:**

Kérjük, vegye fel velünk a kapcsolatot, ha más formában kéri ezt az információt.

**Polish:**

Jeżeli chciał(a)by Pan/Pani otrzymać niniejsze informacje w innym formacie, prosimy o kontakt.

**Punjabi:**

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵਿਚ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਨਾ ਝਿਜਕੋ।

**Urdu:**

اگر آپ اس معلومات کو کسی اور صورت میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کرنے میں ہچکچاہٹ محسوس نہ کریں۔

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