

Preterm Prevention Clinic

Doncaster and Bassetlaw
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

What is the Pre-Term Prevention clinic?

This is a specialist clinic which monitors and treats women who are at higher risk of spontaneous early preterm birth (between 24 and 34 weeks of pregnancy) or late miscarriage. The clinic is led by a consultant. There will be a maternity care assistant and preterm birth lead midwife who will be assisting during your consultations in the clinic.

It offers specialised advice to women who have previously experienced a late pregnancy loss, pre-term birth, and those who are at increased risk of premature birth.

Why have I been advised to attend the Prevention Clinic?

Most women are offered an appointment in our clinic after their booking appointment based on the information given to the midwife at booking or GP referral usually alongside their dating scan between 12 and 14 weeks.

You may have been identified as having one or more risk factors for premature birth or late miscarriage in your current pregnancy.

These may include:

- One or more late miscarriages or premature births before 34 weeks.
- Premature rupture of the membranes (bag of waters) in a previous pregnancy.
- Previous surgery to the cervix (neck of womb) after an abnormal smear.
- A short cervix found during a scan in this pregnancy.
- An unusually shaped or abnormal womb (uterus).
- If you have had a cervical cerclage in a previous pregnancy (stitch around the neck of your womb).

If you have one or more of these risk factors, it does not mean you will have a premature birth or late miscarriage but that we know you are at risk and will need closer monitoring.

What happens in the Preterm Prevention Clinic?

You will meet the Preterm Birth Team. Please bring any paperwork given to you in this pregnancy if you have them. The team will ask you lots of questions about your previous pregnancies and your medical history.

You may be offered vaginal swab tests and a transvaginal scan (this is an internal scan where a probe is gently inserted into your vagina) to check the length of the neck of the womb (this does not increase the risk of you having a miscarriage or going into preterm labour).

We may offer you a transvaginal scan once or this may be in regular intervals dependant on your risk factor.

Sometimes we may offer you treatments (see below) that aim to reduce the risk of preterm birth. These will be discussed within your appointments.

If monitoring results show that you are unlikely to have your baby before 34 weeks but we have identified that growth scans are required in the 3rd trimester this will be arranged for you.

There are number of treatments which we may offer you up to 24 weeks of pregnancy.

These include one or more of the following:

- A Cervical Cerclage. This is where a stitch is placed around the neck of your womb.
- Progesterone (hormone) suppositories which you put into your vagina.
- Antibiotics if you have a confirmed urine infection or a vaginal infection.
- If you are at high risk after 22 weeks of pregnancy, we may offer steroid injections to help your baby's lungs develop.

It is important to understand that while there is evidence to suggest that monitoring and treatment can reduce your risk, unfortunately, not all miscarriages and premature births can be prevented.

What tests will be offered?

We will offer you one or more of these investigations, depending on your risk factors:

- A urine test (MSU – Midstream specimen of urine) to check for infection.
- A vaginal swab to check for infection.
- A vaginal swab for fetal fibronectin (FFN) – a specific chemical that is from the neck of the womb. This test might be required in some instances, not always. The lower the concentration of FFN the less likely you are to go into labour. The results take about 10 minutes to process.
- A transvaginal scan. You need an empty bladder to have this test. It is very safe and doesn't cause any problems to your pregnancy.

Do the tests have any risks?

All these tests are safe for you and your baby.

Appointments in the clinic.

The preterm prevention clinic is held every Friday morning in the Antenatal clinic at Doncaster Royal Infirmary hospital.

Please contact Triage immediately and speak to a midwife if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Either a slow trickle or a gush of clear or pinkish fluid from your vagina or any increase in vaginal discharge.
- Backache.
- Cramps like strong period pains.
- A frequent need to urinate.
- A feeling of pressure in your pelvis.
- Contractions more often than every 10 minutes.
- Strong pain, a smelly discharge or bleeding from your vagina.

- Feeling feverish, sick or have a temperature.

Who can I contact with queries and concerns?

All your queries will be answered by the team when you see them in the Preterm Birth Clinic.

If there is any emergency (labour/ leaking/ bleeding), and you need to be seen ASAP, please contact the Maternity Triage on the number 01302 642711 (712).

You will continue to see your midwife for routine community appointments as well as being seen in this clinic.

If you do not have a community appointment then please contact the hub on 01302 642794 and they can arrange appointments for the community team.

Useful supporting groups/ websites

- NICE guideline, Published: 20 November 2015. Last updated: 10 June 2022. www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng25
- Tommy's – Information and support. <https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/premature-birth>
- Tommys My Prem baby app. <https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/premature-birth/my-prem-baby-app>

Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)

The team are available to help with any concerns, complaints or questions you may have about your experience at the Trust. Their office is in the Main Foyer (Gate 4) of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Contact can be made either in person, by telephone or email.

The contact details are:

Telephone: 01302 642764 or 0800 028 8059

Email: dbth.pals.dbh@nhs.net