

Septic Screen Information for Parents

Septic Screen (looking for possible infection)

A Doctor or Nurse Practitioner has assessed your baby and decided that a Septic Screen is required to identify any possible infection which may mean your baby will be prescribed antibiotics. There are many different reasons why your baby may become unwell or is unwell and these investigations will help us to exclude potential reasons. An important condition that we are trying to exclude is meningitis.

What is involved in a Septic Screen?

Cannula and Blood tests

We will insert a cannula into one of your baby's veins (usually the back of the hand) to collect some blood including a blood culture which we will send to the laboratory for a range of blood tests. This cannula will then be left in and secured in order for us to give your baby antibiotics or fluids if required. Once the cannula is no longer needed it will be removed.

Lumbar Puncture

A lumbar puncture is performed under strict aseptic conditions and involves putting a very small needle into the lower back to remove some fluid that surrounds the spinal cord and brain. To perform the test and obtain the fluid your baby is held in a curled position by a member of the nursing staff. This fluid is cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) and will be sent for analysis to look for signs of meningitis.

The Results

Some of the blood tests will be available in 3-4 hours however the blood culture results will not be back for 36 hours. Blood culture samples show us if there are any bacteria in the blood by leaving them in conditions that allow the bacteria to grow. This process takes at least 36 hours so the results will not be available for this period of time.

What happens next?

During the 36 hour period whilst we are waiting for the results, your baby will be started on antibiotics which will be given through the cannula. Your baby will be monitored closely by staff on the neonatal unit or the postnatal ward. If your baby is with you on the postnatal ward, staff from the neonatal unit will come to the area and administer your baby's antibiotics.

Your baby will be reviewed at 24 hours and again at 36 hours by the neonatal team and the results checked. If the results are negative, the team will stop the antibiotics, remove the cannula and you will be able to go home when you are both ready.

However, if the results are positive, or if there is a concern about your baby, then your baby will continue to have antibiotics for at least 5 days. During this time your baby will be reviewed daily by the neonatal team and will also have some of the blood tests repeated. If your baby has to have a full course of antibiotics (5 days) then your baby will need to stay in hospital until 24 hours after the last dose of antibiotics and then will be able to go home.

Please ask a member of staff if you have any questions or there is something you do not understand and we will be happy to help.

Liverpool Women's is a smoke free site. Smoking is not allowed inside the hospital building, grounds, car parks or gardens. If you would like advice about stopping smoking please ask your midwife about this.

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