

THE RED HOUSE GROUP

124 WATLING ST RADLETT HERTS WD7 7JQ | T. 01923 855606 | F. 01923 853577

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR PREGNANCY



Please read this leaflet carefully.

It contains important information about the antenatal care you will receive over the coming months as well as advice to ensure that you and your baby remain in the best health.

What should I do next?

When you first learn that you are pregnant, you can either self-refer to the Antenatal Clinic at Watford General Hospital ([click here to self-refer](#)) or [make an appointment](#) to see your GP who will refer you to the Antenatal Clinic at Watford General Hospital. Watford General Hospital will contact you to arrange your first antenatal appointment.

Throughout your pregnancy, your antenatal care will be organised by the Midwife Services. This care includes regular appointments with the midwife which will take place at your usual surgery.

If you have not already done so, you should book an appointment to see your GP. He will check to ensure that you are in good health and will give you some basic guidance for the next few weeks. He will then refer you to Midwife Services at Watford General Hospital who will contact you to arrange your first "Booking Appointment".

Contact Information

Once your GP has referred you to the Midwife Services at Watford, you can contact them between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. on 01923 217347.

If you have an urgent enquiry outside of these hours, you should contact the Delivery Suite at Watford on 01923 217920, or Katherine Ward on 01923 217366.

Please note that the information above is ONLY applicable for deliveries at WATFORD GENERAL HOSPITAL. If you wish to deliver at an alternative hospital, you will need to discuss this with your GP to arrange appropriate antenatal care.

Health Advice for Pregnant Women

Now that you are pregnant, it is important to follow a few simple guidelines to ensure the health of you and your baby over the coming months.

Folic Acid

The Department of Health Recommends that all pregnant women should take 0.4mg (400 micrograms) of folic acid per day for the first twelve weeks of pregnancy. For further information, please read the section "A Guide to Folic Acid" in the box to the right.

Medication

Please check with your GP or Midwife before taking any tablets, homeopathic remedies or therapies.

Diet

Eating healthily during pregnancy will help your baby develop and grow, and will help you keep fit and healthy. You should eat a healthy balanced diet including:

- Fruit and vegetables – at least 5 portions a day
- Meat, fish and alternatives – 1-2 portions a day
- Milk and dairy foods (low-fat where possible) – several a day
- Bread etc. (wholegrain where possible) – make these the main part of each meal

Remember to wash all salads and vegetables well and eat them immediately. Cook your food thoroughly.

Foods to Avoid

You should avoid eating any of the following foods:

- Liver, pâté
- Shark, marlin, swordfish
- Pre-packed salads
- Unpasteurised cheeses (brie, stilton etc)
- Raw eggs and any food which may contain raw eggs (e.g home-made ice cream, mayonnaise, mousse)

The NHS Pregnancy Book (details on page 6) has more information on diet and exercise on pregnancy.

Please also remember to wash your hands before and after going to the toilet and to wear gloves when gardening or handling animal litter trays.

A Guide to Folic Acid

Why do I need folic acid?

Folic acid is a vitamin found in a number of foods. It is also available as an easy to swallow supplement.

The Department of Health recommend that folic acid supplements are taken prior to becoming pregnant and for the first few weeks of pregnancy. This is because it can help to reduce the risk of having a baby with Spina Bifida and other neural tube defects.

When should I take it?

It is advisable that you start taking folic acid supplements as soon as you decide to plan a pregnancy. If the pregnancy is unplanned you should start taking it as soon as you realise you are pregnant.

You should continue taking folic acid for the first twelve weeks of pregnancy.

How much do I need to take?

The Department of Health recommend that you take at least 0.4mg (400 micrograms) of folic acid per day, regardless of how well balanced your diet is. Folic acid supplements should be available from your local pharmacy.

It is also important to eat foods that are rich in folic acid. These include:

- Green salads
- Raw or lightly cooked vegetables (dark green vegetables like cabbages, peas, broccoli and Brussels sprouts are particularly good sources)
- Fresh fruit
- Fortified breakfast cereals
- Wholemeal bread

If you have had a previous pregnancy affected by neural tube defect then it is recommended that you take 5mg of folic acid daily. Your health professional will be able to advise which is the right dose for you.

If you have any further questions about folic acid then talk to your health professional.

Maternity Pay and Benefits

- Depending on your circumstances you may also be entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay or Social Security Maternity Benefits. To claim these you will need to obtain a signed "Mat B1" Maternity Certificate. You may request this from your midwife or GP no more than 20 weeks before your baby is due. For more information you should contact your local Jobcentre Plus or social security office.

Antenatal Care for You and Your Baby

FW8 Form – Prescription Charge Exemption

You may have been given an FW8 form by your GP - if not you should obtain one from your midwife. By completing this form and handing it in to your GP's reception you will in due course receive a Prescription Charge Exemption Certificate from the Prescription Pricing Authority. This exempts you from paying prescription charges and entitles you to some free dental treatment for the duration of your pregnancy and for a year following the birth of your baby.

Your Booking Appointment.

Once your GP has referred you to Watford, you will be contacted by the Midwife Services to arrange your first appointment, known as your "Booking Appointment".

For further information about what will take place at this appointment, please read the section "Your Booking Appointment" in the box to the right. **Please take a fresh specimen of urine to this appointment.**

Antenatal Blood Tests

As part of your Booking Appointment, samples of your blood will be taken. These will be used to carry out a number of blood tests. For further information about these tests please read the section "A Guide to Antenatal Blood Tests" on the following two pages.

Down's Syndrome Screening and Dating Scan

In addition to the routine blood tests that will be carried out at your Booking Appointment, your midwife will also offer to arrange a free combined screening test for Down's Syndrome. This test will take place at Watford General Hospital and will include a dating scan.

Women who decline Down's Syndrome screening will be offered the dating scan separately.

Further Information about this test is given on page 5.

Maternity Record Book

A Maternity Record Book will be completed for you at your Booking Appointment. **Please take care of this book and remember to carry it with you.** It will assist in monitoring the health of you and your baby during your pregnancy. Please complete the relevant sections and take it along to all your appointments.

Regular Pregnancy Assessments

You will receive a number of full pregnancy assessments at regular intervals. At each visit, your blood pressure, urine sample, growth of your baby and its heartbeat will be checked. **Please remember to take your Maternity Record Book and a clean specimen of urine on every visit.**

A full antenatal plan, giving the dates of these assessments, as well as the other tests mentioned above can be found on the back page of this leaflet.

Your Booking Appointment

What will happen at my first appointment?

At your first appointment with the midwife, you will have the opportunity to discuss your pregnancy. The midwife will want to discuss your medical history including any previous pregnancies.

What questions will I be asked?

In order to provide care that is appropriate to your needs, the midwife at your booking appointment will ask you lots of questions and complete a number of forms.

In asking these questions they will be able to establish an accurate picture of your health and that of your partners and any relevant family medical history.

These questions will include:

- Finding out about past illnesses and admissions to hospital you may have had
- Finding out if you have suffered any depression, anxiety or mental health problems in the past
- Finding out if there is anything happening in your personal or work life at the present time that may make pregnancy more difficult, e.g. domestic violence
- Questions in relation to substance misuse, both current or in the past
- Finding out about support networks available to you in the community

How will this information be used?

Information obtained at the booking appointment is used in planning, organizing and delivery of your care by a variety of professionals. It may be necessary to share information with other professionals to ensure that the knowledge, skills and expertise of a range of professionals and organizations can participate in your care. We will only ever use or pass on information about you if others involved in your care have a genuine need for it.

Everyone in the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential and anyone who receives information from us is also under a legal duty to keep it confidential.

- Further information can be obtained via your midwife and the Trust leaflet: **Your information – Your Health Records, What you need to know**

A Guide To Antenatal Blood Tests

At your first visit, with your permission and a full explanation, a series of blood tests will be taken. Each is designed to help you and your baby stay in the best possible health. These blood tests are explained below.

Full Blood Count

This gives a picture of your general health and includes haemoglobin (Hb) to see if you are anemic and need iron. During pregnancy, a woman's blood must transport oxygen not only for herself, but also for her baby. This oxygen is carried around in her blood by an iron-containing pigment called haemoglobin. If you do not have ample iron, you may develop anaemia and will not be able to carry enough oxygen. As a result, you may become extremely tired and listless.

This part of the test checks that you have sufficient haemoglobin in your blood. Eating plenty of green vegetables will increase the amount of iron in your diet. You may also be given iron tablets to supplement your intake.

Random Blood Sugar (Glucose)

This indicates your body's ability to absorb sugar.

Blood Group and Rhesus Factor

By discovering your blood group, doctors will quickly be able to find a suitable match to your own blood, should you, in a rare instance, need a blood transfusion at any stage.

Everyone's blood is either Rhesus positive or Rhesus negative. If the test shows that you have Rhesus negative blood, you may need some special treatments before and/or after giving birth, to protect not only this baby but also any future babies that you may have.

For further information please read the section "Rhesus Factor Explained" in the box to the right.

Haemoglobinopathy

e.g Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia.

These are conditions inherited from parents or grandparents, which can cause anaemia in your baby. If you have inherited this you will be able to discuss this with a specialist midwife and/or doctor.

Rubella (German Measles)

Your blood will be analysed to check that you have been successfully immunized against rubella. If so, you and your baby are **safe** from the disease. If the test shows that you are not protected from this disease and you become infected during pregnancy the baby may suffer damage to the brain, heart, ears, or eyes. However, you will be given advice on how to minimize the risk. Doctors may then recommend that you be immunized after you have given birth to protect you and any babies you may have in the future. Most women **are immune** and will therefore not get infected if they are in contact with someone who has the infection.

Rhesus Factor Explained

Of particular concern is Rhesus disease. Blood cells are coated with many different proteins called antigens. One, called factor D, is present in the blood in 7 out of 8 people. These people are said to have Rhesus positive blood. The remaining 1 in 8 Rhesus negative people have no factor D. It is very dangerous to mix Rhesus negative and Rhesus positive blood. Problems start when a Rhesus negative woman gives birth to a Rhesus positive baby.

In the UK this occurs in about 1 in 11 pregnancies. During labour small amounts of the baby's blood enter the mother's circulation. The factor D in the baby's blood is recognized as "foreign" and the mother builds proteins (antibodies) to destroy the baby's blood. However, the first baby is seldom harmed because by the time these antibodies have been made the baby is born and is safe.

Problems arise during subsequent pregnancies. Without treatment the antibodies remain in the women's blood and may attack future unborn babies.

This problem can normally be **prevented**. Soon after giving birth, a Rhesus negative woman may be injected with artificial antibodies, which destroy any of the baby's blood that entered her circulation.

This in turn prevents that mother forming her own antibodies. The artificial antibodies do not last long, and are not around to cause trouble during a future pregnancy. A national policy of treating Rhesus negative women has reduced the number of cases of Rhesus disease dramatically, but it has not been eradicated. The NICE (National Institute of Clinical Excellence) recommends that all Rhesus Negative women are given Anti-D injections in every pregnancy, usually around **28 & 34 weeks** gestation.

Hepatitis B

A test will look to see whether you have ever been infected by the Hepatitis B virus. If you have, and **it is rare**, you will need extra care so that you and your baby are kept safe. Hepatitis B is a virus, which can, in the long term, affect your liver. About 10% of people infected will become carriers - not ill themselves, but able to pass the virus to others. There are 3 ways in which it can be passed to another person: through sexual contact, from direct contact with blood via injury or needles, or passed from a mother to her baby at or around the birth. If it is known that a woman is a carrier, her baby can be prevented from acquiring the infection by starting a programme of injections within hours of birth.

Continued on next page

Syphilis

This is a sexually transmitted infection. A woman may have the infection without any symptoms. If the infection passes to the baby during pregnancy it can cause damage to the brain and bones. Syphilis can be **completely cured** with antibiotics and the baby will be monitored after birth to ensure it is infection free.

HIV

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) affects the immune system, which is important for fighting infection. A person who carries HIV may remain well for many years without symptoms, but can pass it on to others. It is up to you if you want to be tested for the HIV virus. It is recommended that **all women** are tested for HIV as women who appear to be low risk may be infected, and although there is no cure, prompt treatment may delay the onset of serious illness for many years. Also, with treatment the chance of the baby being affected is reduced by two-thirds. The treatment offered will be drugs to reduce the development of the infection and possibly delivery by caesarian section. It is also recommended that babies are bottle fed as the virus is found in breast milk.

During pregnancy it is a difficult time for a woman to discover she is HIV positive, but reassurance is given that the information will be handled in confidence and maximum support will be available. Testing for HIV during pregnancy **does not** affect a woman's application for insurance or mortgage if she tests negative.

Please obtain further information from your midwife about the test before you make a decision.

Antibodies

Your blood is checked for the presence of any antibodies, although this is not common. If present, you will need regular blood tests to monitor the levels.

Please speak to your midwife if you are unsure about any of the above information.

*In order to protect the confidentiality of patients, **no blood test results will be given out over the telephone.** Please **do not** contact the hospital or the midwife service by telephone regarding blood test results. If your blood tests need further discussion you will be contacted by the hospital as soon as possible. Alternatively, your midwife will inform you of your blood test result at your next visit.*

Down's Syndrome Screening and Dating Scan

Your midwife will offer to arrange a test that screens for Down's Syndrome. This test will indicate if you have an increased risk of having a baby with this condition. It cannot tell you for certain if your baby is affected or not, however it can indicate if you should be offered further tests.

The Combined Screening Test (Nuchal Scan)

All women who attend a booking appointment before 10 weeks will be offered the Combined Screening Test for Down's Syndrome (known as the Nuchal Scan).

This test is free and is carried out at **11-14 weeks** at a single appointment at Watford General Hospital. Your midwife will organise this and an appointment will be sent to you.

The test involves having an ultrasound scan and a blood test. The results from these are combined with your age to give an overall risk of your baby having Down's Syndrome.

The expected delivery date of your baby will also be determined as part of this test, so you will not need a separate dating scan.

This test is also available privately from the following clinics:

- The Fetal Medicine Centre:..... 020 7486 0476
- The Verulam Clinic:..... 01727 833100
- My Ultra Baby Watford..... 0844 414 3014

The Quadruple Test

Women who present too late for the above test (which can only be performed before 14 weeks) and who request Down's Syndrome screening will be offered an alternative blood test called the Quadruple Test, as well as a separate dating scan.

This test is free and is carried out at Watford General Hospital. It can be performed at 15-20 weeks but for the most accurate results **15-16 weeks** is recommended.

To book an appointment, please contact **01923 217347** from **9.00 am to 4.30 pm Monday to Friday.**

Please remember, these tests will only provide a risk level not a definitive result.

Dating Scan

Women who decline Down's Syndrome screening will be offered a separate dating scan between **11-14 weeks**. This takes place at Watford General Hospital and will determine the expected delivery date of your baby. Your midwife will organise this.

Antenatal Plan

- 7-8 weeks:**Booking Appointment - *see page 3 for further details.*
- 11-14 weeks:**Combined Screening Test (Nuchal Scan) - *see page 5 for further details.*
This is offered for free to all women and is also available privately.
- 11-14 weeks:**Dating scan for women who decline Down's Syndrome screening
see page 5 for further details.
- 15-20 weeks:**Quadruple Test for women who missed the Combined Screening Test
see page 5 for further details.
- 16 weeks:**Full pregnancy assessment by midwife.
- 18-20 weeks:**Ultrasound scan at Watford General Hospital. Please ensure that you have a full bladder.
- After 21 weeks:**....You may request a "Mat B1 Form" from your midwife or GP. - *see page 2 for further details.*
- 24 weeks:**Additional full pregnancy assessment for first time mums only.
- 28 weeks:**Full pregnancy assessment (with routine blood samples taken by your midwife).
Rhesus negative ladies will require an Anti-D injection (please contact the Day Unit at Watford General Hospital on 01923 217851 to arrange your appointment).
- 32 weeks:**Additional full pregnancy assessment by your GP for first time mums only.
- 34 weeks:**Rhesus negative ladies require 2nd Anti-D injection at Watford General Hospital.
- 36 weeks:**Full pregnancy assessment by the Midwife.
- 38 weeks:**Full pregnancy assessment by the Midwife.
- 40 weeks:**Additional full pregnancy assessment by the Midwife for first time mums only.
- 41 weeks:**Full pregnancy assessment by the Midwife.
Induction booked at Watford General Hospital for 12 days post due date.

Please remember to take your Maternity Record Book and a fresh specimen of urine on every visit.

Further Resources

Parent Education Classes

These are available to ask questions about pregnancy, labour and the postnatal period and a place to meet other parents to be. They include information on process of labour, pain relief, feeding methods and baby care.

Free classes are available at Watford - ask your Midwife for details. Alternative classes are available through the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) or Spire Bushey.

- Watford Tour 01923 217686
- NCT Classes 0844 243 6892
- Spire Bushey 0208 901 5555

Women's Health Information

- www.womens-health.co.uk

Women's Health Information is a web-based resource of information for women and their partners concerning pregnancy choices, complications, and investigations, as well as some information on other diseases that can affect a woman's health.

Pregnancy Book

- www.dh.gov.uk

The NHS Pregnancy Book is available to download from the above website. This book covers all aspects of maternity and is an up-to-date complete guide to healthy pregnancy, labour, childbirth and the first few weeks of life with the baby.