

Fetal Ovarian Cysts

Patient Information Series – What you should know, what you should ask.

What are fetal ovarian cysts?

When a female fetus develops fluid filled sacs on their ovaries that are more than 2cm in size, this is called a fetal ovarian cyst.

How do fetal ovarian cysts happen?

Fetal ovarian cysts happen because the fetus in the womb is exposed to pregnancy related hormones from the mother and the placenta. The ovary reacts to these hormones by making cysts. This happens in one of about every 2,500 live births.

Should I have more tests done?

Fetal ovarian cysts are diagnosed by ultrasound. They should also be followed with ultrasounds throughout the pregnancy to see if they change. Occasionally, MRI may be done to look at the cysts as well. Fetal ovarian cysts are not genetic, therefore genetic testing does not need to be done for this reason alone.

What are the things to watch for during the pregnancy?

Fetal ovarian cysts can have complications such as bleeding into the cyst or twisting of the cyst (called torsion). Babies with ovarian cysts can sometimes develop problems with a blockage of other organs from the cyst. If there is a blockage of the bowels, this may affect the baby's ability to swallow before birth and cause extra amniotic fluid around the baby, this is called polyhydramnios.

What does it mean for my baby after it is born?

After the baby is born she will need to have the cyst monitored, usually by ultrasound. Most cysts go away on their own in the months after birth. Sometimes the baby will need surgery for the cyst. Surgery may be recommended if the cyst is causing the baby symptoms (such as pain), if the cyst is very large, or if the cyst does not go away over time.

In some babies, the cyst will lead to damage to the ovary and it will not function normally. This often means that the baby will have only one normal ovary. Women with one ovary still go through puberty and are able to have children.

Will it happen again?

Having one baby with fetal ovarian cysts does not put you at increased risk for this to happen in another pregnancy.

Fetal Ovarian Cysts

Patient Information Series – What you should know, what you should ask.

What other questions should I ask?

- Is this cyst on one side or both sides? If one side, which side is it on?
- How big is the cyst?
- Does the cyst look simple or complex?
- Can I meet in advance the team of doctors that will be looking after my baby when it is born? Can I meet with a paediatric surgeon?
- Where should I deliver my baby?

Disclaimer:

The content of [this leaflet/ our website] is provided for general information only. It is not intended to amount to medical advice on which you should rely. You must obtain professional or specialised individual medical advice relating to your individual position before taking, or refraining from, any action on the basis of the content on [this leaflet/ our website]. Although we make reasonable efforts to update the information on [our leaflets/ website], we make no representations, warranties or guarantees, whether express or implied, that the content on [our leaflet/ website] is accurate, complete or up to date.

Last updated September 2019