

# New screening for pregnant women now offered in Wales

Wales is the first UK nation to introduce Non-invasive Prenatal Testing (NIPT) across the whole country as an addition to the existing antenatal screening offer.

The test will be offered to women who have taken up the initial offer of screening and are found to be at a higher chance of Down's, Edward's or Patau's syndrome.

The NIPT test is offered as an alternative to an invasive test as this part of the pathway. As an invasive test has a small risk of miscarriage, offering NIPT is expected to reduce this risk as fewer invasive tests are expected to be undertaken in Wales.

The Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Our antenatal screening programme plays an important role in providing expectant mothers with the information and support they need throughout their pregnancy. I'm pleased Wales is leading the way by offering NIPT as part of our programme. This more accurate test will reduce the need of further invasive tests in most cases, therefore reducing the incidence of miscarriages related to invasive procedures.”

From today, combined screening for Edward's and Patau's in the first trimester for women having one baby, and combined screening for Down's, Edward's and Patau's in the first trimester for twin pregnancies, are also introduced in Wales.

The decision to implement NIPT in Wales follows expert advice from the UK National Screening Committee. Its introduction will be evaluated over the next three years.

Sharon Hillier; Director of Screening for Public Health Wales, said:

“It is important that women are supported with information about the conditions and the screening offered so they can make the right decision for them as to whether they want to accept this offer.

“We have worked closely with parents, charities and health professionals to improve the pathway and the information that we provide to pregnant women in Wales.

“We've taken the opportunity to update the pre-test written information as well as producing it as a short film. Health

professionals involved in discussing the screening with women have undertaken training which has focused on personalised choice and up to date information on the conditions screened for.”