

# Polyhydramnios

Information for patients



Leeds  
Maternity Care

This leaflet is aimed at pregnant women with an unexpected finding of polyhydramnios on ultrasound examination.

The leaflet should only be supplied in supplement to a consultation with an obstetrician.

### **What does polyhydramnios mean?**

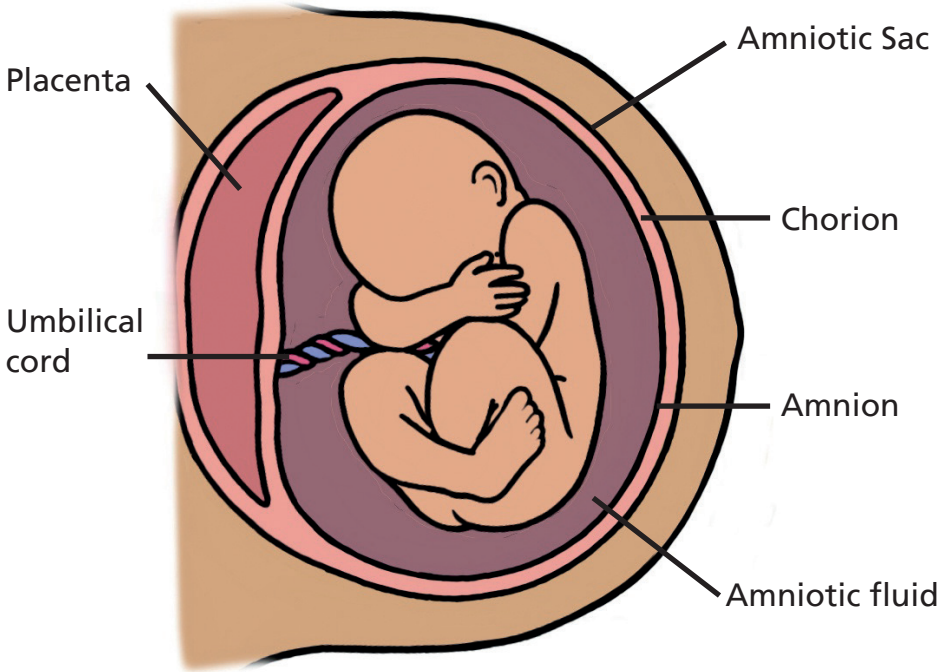
Polyhydramnios is diagnosed when the amount of amniotic fluid (also referred to as liquor) surrounding your baby is above the expected normal range. This range changes depending on your gestation.

Polyhydramnios can only be diagnosed following an ultrasound scan.

### **What is amniotic fluid and what does it do?**

During your pregnancy, the baby is cushioned inside a fluid-filled bag (amniotic sac). The wall of the amniotic sac is made up of two membranes which keep your baby safely sealed in the bag of amniotic fluid.

These membranes usually break open before or during labour, which is commonly referred to as your "waters breaking".



The amniotic fluid is there to cushion your baby and protect it from trauma and also to help with the development of the baby's lungs, muscles and joints.

## Why has this happened?

In most pregnancies where extra amniotic fluid is present, no cause is found and the babies are healthy when they are born.

There are also some additional causes to consider that may require more tests during your pregnancy (these are less common).

- The baby may be urinating more than average due to mum having developed gestational diabetes
- In a monochorionic twin (those that share a placenta) pregnancy this may be a sign of twin to twin transfusion syndrome
- There may be something obstructing the movement through the baby's gastrointestinal tract, such as a narrowing in the bowel or a growth in the chest or neck
- Rarely the amount of fluid round the baby builds up because of a problem with the baby's swallowing, caused by a brain or muscle abnormality

## What does it mean for the pregnancy?

If the additional amniotic fluid is an isolated problem and the baby appears normal on the ultrasound scan, then it is not likely to have a negative impact for your baby. In some situations, the additional fluid in the amniotic sac may mean that the baby may not settle into a head first (cephalic) position.

The increased size of your uterus (womb) can also put you at an increased chance of your waters breaking before your due date. If the baby's head is not engaged at this point there is a risk of the umbilical cord delivering first.

This can be a dangerous situation and may require delivery by Caesarean section.

If any other problems are found in the baby during the ultrasound scan then additional tests and scans may be required. These will be discussed in detail by your fetal medicine consultant if present.

## **What do I do next?**

Your local hospital will discuss your case and may refer you to the Fetal Medicine Unit at the Leeds General Infirmary, if the volume of amniotic fluid is 30cm or more. Leeds Fetal Medicine Unit provides highly specialist care to women from the Yorkshire and Humber region with complicated pregnancies. The doctors in the Fetal Medicine Unit will assess the baby in detail and organise a monitoring and management plan specific to your baby. Depending on these findings you may be offered further tests and future appointments for scans.

## **Where can I get more information and support?**

Be sure to ask questions to the doctor supplying you with this leaflet and make a note of any questions you would like to ask at your Fetal Medicine Unit appointment. Your local hospital will also have a specialist midwife who you will be able to contact for further discussion. Another helpful charitable resource is Antenatal Results and Choices

### **Antenatal Results and Choices**

- [www.arc-uk.org](http://www.arc-uk.org)



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## What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/nhsleedsfft](https://bit.ly/nhsleedsfft)

**Your views matter**



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