

PATIENT INFORMATION

Short Femur

Patient Information Leaflet

During your ultrasound examination your baby's femur length (thigh bone) measured small. The femur length (FL) is one of three measurements used to estimate babies' weight.

The lines on a growth chart are called centiles (or percentiles) and show an expected pattern of growth. The numbers refer to the percentage of babies at or below the line. For example, a baby whose estimated femur length is on the 50th centile, means that 50% of babies at that gestation are the same size or less. Half will also be longer.

On your scan today the femur length has been found to be less than the 3rd centile. This means that the measurement is small compared to most babies' femur length at



Why does my baby have a short femur?

- Most commonly the baby follows a familiar pattern e.g. mum or dad is shorter than average
- Your baby is smaller than average overall. The femur length may be proportional to the rest of the baby.
- It may be a warning sign that the baby's growth is slower than expected.
- Occasionally some babies may be small because of a genetic or chromosomal condition.

When a short femur is the only soft marker seen on ultrasound this indicates that there is less than a 1% (1 in 100) chance of the most common chromosomal diagnosis of Down's Syndrome compared to the background chance. The background is that one in every 1000 (0.1%) babies born in the UK will have Down's Syndrome.

Most women have combined screening in the first trimester of pregnancy. This gives a likelihood of baby having Down's Syndrome based on several pieces of information specific to that pregnancy. We do not have data to explain how these numbers relate to soft markers.

You will be offered a Fetal Medicine appointment to review the scan findings. During the scan they will recheck the measurements and look at the baby in more detail. This may include measurements of other parts of the baby, for example the humerus (arm bone) and any other soft markers (or clues).

You may be asked to consider a test called an amniocentesis. An amniocentesis is a diagnostic test used to look at baby's chromosomes. It is the only way to diagnosis Down Syndrome in pregnancy. It increases the likelihood in early pregnancy of a miscarriage (1:200 or 0.5%) and in later pregnancy of premature birth. You will be given a leaflet about amniocentesis separately.

If you have any further questions or on reflection would like to consider your options again please call the Antenatal Clinic Midwife on 01803 654611.

At Torbay we found that when we re-scanned half of the babies' femur lengths measured bigger. At birth around half of the referred babies were small in size overall when they were born.

[ARC – Antenatal Results and Choices \(www.arc-uk.org\)](http://www.arc-uk.org)

Tel: 020 7713 7486, Monday to Friday 10am to 5:30pm

Text: 07908 683004, Tuesday and Thursday 8am to 10pm

info@arc-uk.org to arrange an evening call.

Useful information on having a small baby

[Having a small baby | RCOG](#)

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.