



Oncology and Haematology Department

Pregnancy testing before starting cancer treatment

Information for parents and carers

Introduction

Cancer treatments can harm an unborn baby if they are carried out while a patient is pregnant. This is especially true at the beginning of a pregnancy when a girl or young woman may not realise they are pregnant. There is also a chance of a miscarriage (losing the baby).

Information on fertility and contraception will have been discussed before chemotherapy is started. National guidance ⁽¹⁾ recommends that health care providers should be aware of a pregnancy in girls and women aged between 12 and 55 years before delivering treatments like chemotherapy. Some drug manufacturers now state that a pregnancy test must be performed before giving treatment to any female patient of childbearing age.

Pregnancy testing at Alder Hey

Female patients aged 12 years or older (who have started their periods) will be asked to provide a sample of urine for a pregnancy test before starting chemotherapy. Pregnancy testing will be repeated each month until the chemotherapy treatment has been completed.

The treatment prescribed is very important for the management of cancer. If a young person becomes pregnant, difficult decisions may need to be made about how the cancer and the pregnancy are managed. We will support patients and their families to make the decisions that are right for them.

If a young person is mature enough to understand the risks, they are judged to be 'competent to consent' by the health professional and can agree to the pregnancy test for themselves. Hospital staff cannot share the result with parents or carers without a competent young person's permission. We will encourage young people to involve their parent / carer in decisions about their care.

We will not inform parents / carers of the pregnancy test results, even if they are negative.

If the patient is not considered mature enough to consent for themselves, their parent / legal guardian will be asked to consent on their behalf. They have the right to refuse a pregnancy test for their daughter. We would want to discuss the reasons why to help us make the best decisions about treatment and to keep the patient safe.

Sometimes it is necessary to cancel or delay treatment at short notice due to availability of resources. If this happens, please do not assume that this is due to the result of a pregnancy test.

If you have any questions or need more information

Please speak to the doctor or nurse caring for your daughter

(1) TYAC Best Practice Statement Pregnancy Assessment/testing in teenage and young adult females August 2015

This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child's treatment.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

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