

Small for Gestational Age (SGA)

Information for parents

Some babies may be closely monitored or treated because they are smaller than usual at a particular stage of pregnancy.

What is wrong?

Being small for gestational age (SGA) means that the baby may be at higher risk of problems. Sometimes problems can occur before the baby is born. Possible problems after the baby is born include:

Small babies find it harder to keep warm.

The baby may have a blood sugar level that is too low.

The baby will probably be more hungry and need more milk than usual.

Which babies are at risk?

Babies whose mothers have high blood pressure or toxæmia

Babies who get an infection while in their mother's womb.
(This is uncommon.)

Babies of mothers who smoke.

Some babies are small but have no particular risk factors.

Is it serious?

Not usually.

Some babies who had, or have an infection while in their mother's womb may develop other problems after the birth, such as jaundice.

What tests are carried out?

Blood taken from a heel prick is tested to check your baby's blood sugar level.

Some babies may require additional tests to check whether there has been any infection, or other rare cause of being small.

What treatment may be needed?

Because your baby is small it is very important to make sure your baby gets enough milk. You will also need to check your baby is warm enough.

Some SGA babies need to be admitted to the Newborn Service for treatment and monitoring.

Some babies need an intravenous glucose drip to bring their blood sugar level up to normal. This is an important treatment as **untreated** low blood sugar levels can cause brain damage. (Refer to the leaflet on Low Blood Sugar in Newborn Babies)

If the baby has a low blood sugar he or she may also need some extra (complementary) feeds. This can be expressed breast milk or formula.

Leaving hospital

It is important that an SGA baby is gaining weight and feeding well before leaving hospital. It is important for you to continue to have their growth and development checked by a Well Child service, or your family doctor (GP) to make sure they are making good progress.

This leaflet provides a guide only. If you have concerns or want more information about your baby, ask the doctor or nurse providing your baby's care.