

North Carolina Women's Hospital
Choroid Plexus Cysts
(kor-oid plek-ses sist)

What is a choroid plexus cyst?

A choroid plexus cyst (or CPC) is a cyst that is seen on a part of the brain called the choroid plexus. These cysts are usually identified during an ultrasound.

The choroid plexus is located in the middle of the brain. It is the area of the brain that makes spinal fluid. This fluid surrounds the brain and spinal cord. There is one choroid plexus on either side of the brain. This is not an area of the brain that is involved in thinking.

Cysts are small fluid-filled sacs. A cyst can form inside the choroid plexus. Cysts can be found in one or both of the choroid plexus in the brain and can be different sizes.

How common are choroid plexus cysts?

Choroid plexus cysts are seen in about 1-2% (or 1 in 100 to 1 in 50) of all ultrasounds done in the second and third trimesters. Most disappear in the third trimester, but it is not a problem if they do not. These cysts can also be found in adult brains. They may go unnoticed during a person's lifetime because they do not cause problems for children or adults.

What does a choroid plexus cyst mean for my baby?

A choroid plexus cyst does not cause learning problems or mental retardation. It is not a tumor or cancer. Although it can be scary to hear the words "cyst" and "brain" in the same sentence, these cysts do not cause problems for a baby.

Although a choroid plexus cyst itself does not cause problems in a baby, it may be a sign of a chromosome problem called trisomy 18. The risk of this problem is increased if additional findings are seen on ultrasound or if you will be 35 years or older at your due date.

Chromosomes are structures that hold all of our genetic information. This genetic information acts as our body's instruction manual. If there is a change in these instructions, like extra or lost information, a baby may not develop properly. Most people have 46 chromosomes in every cell of their body. These chromosomes come in pairs, with one coming from the mother, and one from the father. This makes 23 pairs of chromosomes. If there is an extra or missing chromosome, there are too many or too few instructions. Extra or missing instructions can cause multiple birth defects and mental retardation.

What is trisomy 18?

Babies with trisomy 18 have an extra copy of chromosome 18, which causes severe medical problems and mental retardation. Extra chromosome 18 material leads to health problems like heart defects, breathing problems, kidney problems, infections, and problems with digestion. Most babies with trisomy 18 die before or soon after birth. If a baby does survive, he or she will have severe mental retardation. Most babies with trisomy 18 do not live past their first birthday.

Trisomy 18 occurs by chance and can happen in any pregnancy. It is not caused by anything that the parents did or did not do. We do know that as women get older, there is an increased chance of having a child with trisomy 18.

How can I find out more about choroid plexus cysts and Trisomy 18?

You can talk to a genetic counselor about choroid plexus cysts and trisomy 18. She or he will try to answer any questions you have. A genetic counselor can also talk about testing to find out if your baby has trisomy 18 or any other chromosome problem.

There are two types of testing the genetic counselor will talk about. One is a screening test, sometimes called a quad screen. This is a blood test. It looks at chemicals the pregnancy has produced in your blood. Different levels of the chemicals are clues about whether the baby has a chromosome problem, but it will not tell you for sure if the baby has any extra or missing chromosomes.

The second kind of test is called an amniocentesis. It is diagnostic and it *can* tell how many chromosomes the baby has. An amniocentesis is performed by taking a sample of the fluid that is around the baby. Because a needle is used to obtain the fluid, there is a risk for loss of the pregnancy. About 0.2-0.3% (or 1 in 300 to 1 in 500) of people who have this test may have a miscarriage.

Most babies with choroid plexus cysts do NOT have trisomy 18. Talk to the genetic counselor about the chances of your baby having a chromosome problem.

You can schedule an appointment with a genetic counselor at UNC by calling (919) 843-6095.