

Hepatic Cyst

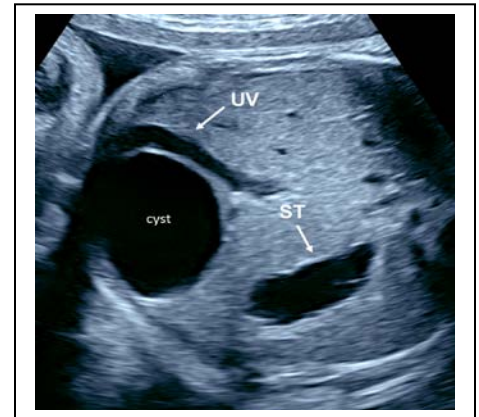
Patient Information Series – What you should know, what you should ask.

What is a hepatic cyst in the fetus?

A hepatic cyst is a fluid-filled structure in the fetal liver. When small, they may cause no problems in the fetus. Occasionally, they are large and can compress other nearby organs.

How is a hepatic cyst detected?

A hepatic cyst can be detected by prenatal ultrasound, usually in the third trimester on an ultrasound examination ordered to assess the growth of the baby. They are seen as round areas within the fetal liver on ultrasound examination.



This image shows the cyst and its relationship to the umbilical vein (UV) and the fetal stomach..

What causes hepatic cysts?

We don't know why some fetuses have hepatic cysts. They commonly arise from cells typical of the biliary (bile) tract, but are not connected to the biliary tract in any way.

Should I have more tests done?

You will be offered additional testing to help determine the location the cyst, and to make sure that there are no other abnormal ultrasound findings in the baby.

Tests that may be offered include:

- **A detailed ultrasound examination:** This is to carefully look at your baby for any other ultrasound findings or abnormalities and to make sure that the cyst is located within the liver. Ultrasound can identify many but not all abnormalities.
- **Additional ultrasound examinations:** These are done to monitor the growth of the baby and the size of the cysts. Some cysts actually disappear during pregnancy, while others may grow. If the cyst grows larger, ultrasound can be used to see if there is compression of any other nearby organs.

What are the things to watch for during the pregnancy?

Additional ultrasound examinations will be done to monitor the size of the cyst. Occasionally, women develop extra fluid in the sac (polyhydramnios) which can cause preterm contractions or labor.

Hepatic Cyst

Patient Information Series – What you should know, what you should ask.

How are liver cysts managed after birth?

If the cyst remains small, your baby will likely be healthy at birth. The baby will most likely have an ultrasound after delivery to evaluate the size and location of the cyst, and to have follow-up with a pediatrician. These cysts may grow after delivery, so usually abdominal ultrasound examinations are performed to monitor the size of the cyst. If the baby becomes symptomatic or if the cyst becomes large, surgical removal may be suggested. Long-term, these babies have excellent outcome.

Will it happen again?

Hepatic cysts are unlikely to be seen in the next pregnancy.

What other questions should I ask?

- Are there any other abnormalities on the ultrasound?
- How often will I have ultrasound examinations done?
- Will my baby need surgery after delivery?
- Where should I deliver?
- Where will the baby receive the best care after it is born?
- Can I meet the team of doctors that will be assisting my baby when it is born, prior to delivery?