

Adrenal Hemorrhage

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

What are the adrenal glands?

The adrenal glands are structures located above the kidneys. They produce hormones needed for the body to function normally.

How does an adrenal hemorrhage occur?

We do not know why adrenal hemorrhages happen. We think that adrenal hemorrhage may be caused by changes in pressure in the blood vessels connected to the adrenal glands.

What are risk factors for developing an adrenal hemorrhage?

We are unable to predict which babies will develop an adrenal hemorrhage before they are born.

How is adrenal hemorrhage diagnosed?

An adrenal hemorrhage is suspected when a mass is seen on ultrasound just above the kidney. This mass can have a variety of different appearances on ultrasound.

What is the next step once adrenal hemorrhage is diagnosed?

After an adrenal hemorrhage is identified, the next step is to continue monitoring with frequent ultrasounds. Over time, just like how a bruise changes color, the appearance of an adrenal hemorrhage may change on ultrasound imaging which can give us an idea on how the hemorrhage is evolving.

How will adrenal hemorrhage affect my baby once it is born?

In most cases, an adrenal hemorrhage typically has minimal effect on the baby. In fact, even if only a small amount of working adrenal gland remains, many times that is still enough to provide normal hormonal function! Occasionally a baby will need medicines after they are born, but this is really rare.

What other questions should I ask?

- Are there any other abnormalities on the ultrasound?
- How often will I have ultrasound examinations done?
- What tests will be done to evaluate my baby before or 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 prior to the delivery who will be assisting my baby after it is born