



FACT SHEET - Health Care Professionals - How to Deliver Screening Results

Healthcare professionals need to be aware that the manner in which screening results are delivered can influence prospective parents perception of the results and the choices they may make.

Carefully consider how you share news of a high chance screening result with prospective parents. The exact wording used by health care professionals to convey screening or diagnostic results is often recalled by prospective parents many years later.

Good clinical communication means providing information that is 'relevant, respectful, timely, non-judgmental and non-biased' (Queensland Clinical Guidelines, 2018, p.15)

Unfortunately, for many prospective parents, the way in which they received their high chance screening results did not reflect good clinical communication and compromised their ability to make informed decisions (Down Syndrome Australia, 2021).



Sharing Unexpected News:

- Where possible, arrangements should be made to share the news face-to-face and the woman or pregnant person should have the opportunity for their partner or another support person to be present.
- Arrange for a quiet space for the conversation where the woman or pregnant person and their support person will have the opportunity to remain and absorb the information if they wish.
- Ideally, phone contact with the woman or pregnant person to arrange the in-person conversation should be made by a health professional with whom they are familiar.
- Recognise that the news shared has the potential to impact on the mental wellbeing of the woman or pregnant person.

Health professionals should prioritise immediate availability to the woman or pregnant person to provide further information and support.

References

Down Syndrome Australia. (2021). 'We all have a lot to learn' – Prenatal screening for Down syndrome: A discussion paper.

https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/DSA_Prenatal-Screening-Experiences.pdf

Down Syndrome Queensland. (2022). Practice Resource – Prenatal Screening for Chromosomal Conditions including Down syndrome.

<https://prenatalscreening.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Prenatal-Screening-Practice-Resource.pdf>

Queensland Health. (2018). Maternity and Neonatal Clinical Guideline: Standard Care, Guideline No. MN18.50-V1-R23. Queensland Government.