

The reaction in your body following this treatment will help your blood flow more easily, and encourage a better circulation to the placenta.

### **Are there any possible side effects from this treatment?**

If heparin is given on a long-term basis it may slightly reduce the calcium level in the bone. This can be replaced by eating well. Your diet should include calcium rich foods, such as milk, and milk products like yoghurt. Cheese, eggs, and broccoli are also a good source of calcium. Remembering to exercise will help to build up your bone density and one of the best ways to do this is walking.

This treatment does effect platelet levels in the blood. This is because heparin is effective in helping your clotting system to function better. In order to make sure you have the correct blood levels your blood will be monitored by regular checks.

Another small side effect is slight bruising around the sight of injection. Your midwife or nurse will advise you on the best way for you to give your injection. Simply not rubbing the injection sight reduces bruising.

### **What kind of follow up will I have?**

Now that we are aware of this problem we may be able to anticipate further problems by giving the right type of medication. As you have been told you have Lupus your next pregnancy will be monitored closely and this will mean coming to the hospital more often to see your consultant.

There are consultants who have a special interest in this field. For further information please contact the secretaries of Mr Walkinshaw, Mr Alfirevic, or Mr. Farquharson.  
Tel: 0151 708 9988

An organisation that may help you find more information, is Lupus UK.  
Lupus UK, St James House, Eastern Road, Romford, Essex RM1 3NH.  
Tel.01708 731251  
Fax. 01708 731252.

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**Visit our Web site at [www.lwh.org.uk](http://www.lwh.org.uk).**

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# Lupus Anticoagulant

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We have found that you have Lupus Anticoagulant. This information sheet will help you to understand how we have detected this, what the meaning of this is to you and your future, and the possible treatment you may have.

## **What usually happens in the blood?**

In all of us there is a delicate balance in our blood between things that help us clot, (stopping us from bleeding too much), and things that stop this happening (making us clot too much).

In most people this system works well, but the normal hormone changes in pregnancy change the way this works.

These changes mean the blood is slightly more likely to clot than normal. This is nature's way of preventing women from bleeding too much after birth.

Normally this does not matter but sometimes we are made aware that this delicate balance has been changed, this results in clots forming more easily in some women than in others.

## **What have we found?**

We have found that you have Lupus Anticoagulant from blood tests done recently.

This means that you have properties in your blood that may make it more likely to clot, you may also set up an "autoimmune reaction". This means your body's immune system becomes too active and starts to attack parts of itself. Common examples of this are: Rheumatoid Arthritis or some types of overactive thyroid gland.

Most people who have Lupus are women. This may be genetically linked with the main contributing factor being varying hormonal activity in the woman's body. At the moment there are 40,000 people with Lupus in the UK.

## **What does it mean for your future?**

Lupus in pregnancy unfortunately increases the risk of miscarriage.

More recently we have found a link between Lupus and an increased risk of pre-eclampsia. Pre-eclampsia is a combination of factors such as protein in the urine, headaches, and retaining fluid (oedema).

Pre-eclampsia is an important cause of premature birth in the UK.

Sometimes it puts either you or the baby at risk. Babies may not grow well, or there can be serious bleeding behind the placenta.

## **Is there any form of treatment?**

In an effort to stop this happening again, your consultant may decide to give you treatment with heparin and aspirin in your next pregnancy.

This helps to thin your blood, and also make the cells less sticky. This may prevent clots forming in your circulatory system and the placenta. (Although this is found to help give a better outcome to women whose pregnancies are affected by Lupus, we still do not know why this treatment works extremely well for some and not for others).

## **Treatment**

Aspirin (1/2 a baby tablet) is taken every day by tablet. This is known to be safe.

Heparin is a very small injection given into the upper layers of your skin on a daily basis. Although this may seem invasive this method is the most effective way to ensure that medication is absorbed properly into your body. This does not mean that you will be completely dependant on others whilst you are pregnant, many women can give this injection to themselves once shown by a midwife or nurse.