Choroid Plexus Cysts

The word ‘cyst’ simply means fluid filled. The choroid is a gland-like area that is located in the ventricles of the brain. The choroid plexus makes fluid that circulates in and around the brain through a complex system interconnecting ventricles. The fluid helps to protect and nourish the brain. Sometimes the fluid temporarily becomes trapped within the choroid plexus to produce a ‘choroid plexus cyst’. There are a few things to know about choroid plexus cysts:

a) They have nothing to do with brain development or function.

b) They ALWAYS resolve, 100% of the time (there are no exceptions to this). Usually by 22 weeks but certainly by 24 weeks.

c) They are most commonly considered a ‘normal variant’, seen in 1-3% of all fetuses during the 2nd trimester.

d) Their only potential significance is an association with certain chromosome abnormalities. The strongest association is with something called ‘trisomy 18’ which is like Down syndrome (trisomy 21) only much worse, so that these fetuses tend to have multiple abnormalities which can also be seen by ultrasound. Therefore, seeing a choroid cyst is simply a reminder to take a good look at the fetus, which is what we always do in any case. In regards to Down syndrome, if we see only a choroid cyst, it actually reduces the potential risk of Down syndrome, but not as much as if we hadn’t seen it. If other ‘markers’ are also seen, then a choroid cyst slightly increases the risk for fetal Down syndrome.

e) We do not offer or suggest genetic amniocentesis when we see choroid cysts alone. Other screening results are much more important than the presence of a choroid cyst, so we will always try to correlate this minor finding with other information or screening results. There is no reason to follow these findings with subsequent ultrasounds (see b, above).

If you have further questions, we have 3 genetic counselors available to discuss your potential risks and to review other screening information.

Further information is available at www.fetalscreening.com and at www.fetalandwomens.com