

Statement Updated 21st March 2022

Statement from the New Zealand Maternal Fetal Medicine Network

Routine measurement of cervical length at time of mid trimester anomaly scan in all women.

Cervical length measurement is performed in pregnancy when there are risk factors for preterm birth in order to more accurately predict those who may benefit from interventions such as progesterone therapy or a cervical cerclage.

Clinical trials have explored the potential of these interventions in pregnancies with a short cervix with or without other risk factors. The demonstration of a reduction in preterm birth rates associated with use of progesterone with a sonographically identified short cervix has led to suggestion that universal cervical length screening should be introduced, regardless of risk factors. However, it is important to recognise that these studies have not investigated the effect of cervical length screening, simply the effect of a treatment once a short cervix has been identified.

Large prediction studies that have identified there is an increased relative risk of preterm birth as the length of the cervix decreases. This has been in general populations which include pregnancies with risk factors for preterm birth, multiparous people with no previous preterm birth and nulliparous people. It is likely that for each of these groups the test and potential interventions will behave differently and this should be considered when reviewing their results.

Pregnancies without risk factors for preterm birth are at very low risk of spontaneous early preterm birth (<1% deliver <32 weeks) and have a very low prevalence of a short cervix at 20 weeks gestation (0.5-1% <20mm). Therefore, although progesterone may be associated with a reduction in an individual's risk of preterm birth once short cervix has been identified it is not yet clear if a policy of routine transvaginal cervical length scanning is beneficial.

Pregnancies who have risk factors for preterm birth should continue to have cervical surveillance as per the [NZ Obstetric Ultrasound Guidelines](#).

The NZMFM Network does not currently support a policy of routine transvaginal cervical length scanning at the time of the mid trimester anomaly scan. In the event of an incidental finding of a short cervix, specialist consultation should be sought and the use of progesterone considered.