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Information -Ultrasound Scan



The leaflet tells you about having an ultrasound scan. It explains what is involved and what the possible risks are. It is not meant to replace informed discussion between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such discussions. If you have any questions about the procedure please ask the doctor who has referred you for the test or the department which is going to perform it.

1. What is an ultrasound scan?

An ultrasound scan is a picture of part of the inside of the body using sound waves of a frequency above the audible range of the human ear. A small hand-held sensor, which is pressed carefully against the skin surface, generates sound waves and detects any echoes reflected back off the surfaces and tissue boundaries of internal organs. The sensor can be moved over the skin to view the organ from different angles, the pictures being displayed on a screen and recorded for subsequent study. Most people think that this type of scan is only used for examining the unborn child but its use is widespread in medical practice.

Ultrasound images complement other forms of scans and are widely used for many different parts of the body. They can also be used to study blood flow and to detect any narrowing or blockage of blood vessels, for example, in the neck.

An ultrasound scan is also occasionally used for intimate examinations; for example, of the prostate gland in men or of the womb or ovaries in women. For some of these examinations, it may be necessary to place an ultrasound probe in the vagina or the rectum to look at internal structures. If you are having an intimate examination, the radiologist will describe the procedure to you, and your verbal consent will be sought.

2. Are you required to make any special preparations?

Some preparation may be required if your pelvis, kidney or bladder are to be scanned, you may be required to ensure that your bladder is full before the examination can begin. For some examinations such as of the gall bladder and pancreas, you may be required to fast for a specified number of hours. If so, this will be explained in the accompanying appointment letter. You should tell the radiology department in advance if you have had a similar ultrasound scan recently.

3. Can you bring a relative/friend?

Yes. However, it may not be suitable for a friend to remain in the scanning room if you undergo an intimate examination.

4. When you arrive

Please report to the reception desk in the X-ray department, after which you will be shown where to wait until collected by a member of staff.

The procedure for your examination will be explained to you

6. What happens during the scan?

You will be taken into a room where you will be asked to lie down on a couch; the room may be dimmed so that the pictures on the screen can be seen more clearly. A gel will be applied to your skin over the area to be scanned, for example, the abdomen. The gel allows the sensor to slide easily over the skin and helps to produce clearer pictures you may be asked to drink more fluid, and wait while the bladder fills up.

The doctor/sonographer will slowly move the sensor over your skin while viewing the images on the screen. Records of selected images will be made so that they can be viewed later. Upon completion, the gel will be wiped off and you will be free to get dressed.

7. Will it be uncomfortable?

An ultrasound scan itself does not produce discomfort and apart from the sensor on your skin you will not feel anything. If a full bladder is required, though, there may be some associated discomfort. Occasionally it may be necessary to apply some pressure to the skin surface over an inflamed organ, for example, the gallbladder, to check what is causing the pain. This may increase the amount of pain coming from that organ temporarily. You may be asked to take deep breaths and to hold your breath for a few moments. For a scan of the bladder, the bladder may occasionally not be full enough for the examination and

8. How long will it take?

The process of carrying out a scan usually takes about 10–15 minutes. Unless you are delayed, for example, by emergency patients, your total time in the department is likely to be about 30–40 minutes.

9. Are there any risks?

No, there are no known risks and it is considered to be very safe.

10. Can you eat and drink afterwards?

Yes, if you have no further tests scheduled for the same day – please check first.

11. When will you get the results?

The written report on the findings sent to your referring doctor which is normally available same day.

Finally

Some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet, but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you. Make sure you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure.