

Having an Ultrasound scan

Information for Patients



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Introduction

This leaflet tells you about having an ultrasound scan - it explains how the test is done, what to expect, and what the possible risks are.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your referring doctor or GP.

What is an ultrasound scan?

Ultrasound is a non-invasive way of looking inside your body to help diagnose medical conditions and guide treatment. An ultrasound scanner uses high-frequency sound waves and computers to produce pictures of the organs and other structures inside the body, which can be viewed on a computer monitor.

Ultrasound is particularly useful to evaluate the organs of the abdomen and pelvis, blood flow in vessels, superficial structures such as the thyroid gland and lymph glands, muscles and tendons and to identify fluid in the chest or abdomen. It is the imaging test of choice to assess the developing foetus in pregnant patients.

How does it work?

The ultrasound examination is performed by a Radiologist, who is a doctor specially trained to carry out imaging examinations and to interpret the images. Some ultrasound examinations may be performed by a Sonographer, who is a health professional highly trained to carry out and report these scans.

The Radiologist or Sonographer uses a hand-held device called a transducer, which is moved across the body surface and transmits the sound waves into your body. These sound waves are reflected back to the transducer from the different structures and tissues inside the body. The returning sound waves are converted by a computer into a moving image of the internal structures of the body, and the images are displayed on a computer screen.

Are there any risks?

Ultrasound scanning does not use ionizing radiation (x-rays) and is considered a very safe test. For this reason it is often the preferred imaging test in pregnant patients and children.

Tenderness in the area that has been examined can happen, but usually resolves within a few hours of the examination.

What do I need to do to prepare for my scan?

Taking tablets and medicines

You should continue to take all your usual medication as normal.

Preparation

Guidelines about eating and drinking before your scan vary depending on the part of the body to be examined, and you should follow the instructions you are given with your appointment letter.

We may ask you not to eat, and to take clear fluids only, for 6 hours before a scan of the abdomen. If you are diabetic, please contact the department for advice.

You may need to drink fluids to fill the bladder for a scan of the kidneys, bladder or pelvis. If you would prefer to do this on arrival at the hospital, please plan to arrive approximately 30 minutes before your appointment time.

Reasonable Adjustments

If you need to reschedule or require any reasonable adjustments to support your appointment, please let us know in advance

Chaperone

If you wish to have a chaperone during your examination, please let a member of staff know on the day as soon as you arrive so this can be accommodated.

What happens during the examination?

You will be taken into the Ultrasound Scanning Room and asked to sit or lie down on the examination couch. The area to be examined is exposed while the rest of the body is covered. The lighting in the room is usually dimmed to see the images on the computer monitor more clearly.

The Radiologist / sonographer will apply clear gel to your skin before placing the “transducer” (a smooth hand-held device) onto this area using gentle pressure. The transducer is moved across the area with a sliding and rotating action and the real-time images are displayed on the computer screen. The Radiologist / sonographer records still pictures from the moving images on the screen.

During the examination you may be asked to perform some simple movements to improve the quality of the imaging. These may include holding your breath or turning into a different position, such as lying on your side or sitting up.

Occasionally it may be necessary for the Radiologist/sonographer to apply greater pressure with the transducer to see or assess deeper structures in the abdomen. However, if any of these manoeuvres cause you concern or discomfort, you should inform the Radiologist / sonographer immediately.

When the examination is finished the gel is wiped off and you will be able to dress and leave immediately. You may eat and drink as normal as soon as the examination is finished.

How do I get my results?

The Radiologist / sonographer who performed the examination will review the images and send a report to the doctor who referred you for the examination. Your GP or Consultant will see you to discuss the results.

Any questions?

We will do our best to make your visit as comfortable and stress free as possible. If you have any questions, please contact our admin team on 01761 422250 or email us at radiology@sulishospital.com