

What happens during an ultrasound?

Before you have the examination, the sonographer, will ask you questions about why you have come for the ultrasound scan. They will then explain the procedure you are having in detail and answer any questions you have.

Normally, you will be asked to lie down on a bed and the area to be examined is exposed while the rest of the body is covered. Gel is applied to the area of your body which is being imaged. The sonographer will then place the transducer (camera) onto this area using gentle pressure.

The sonographer takes still photographs from the moving images on the screen.

You may be asked to perform some simple movements to improve the quality of the imaging. For example:

- 'Taking a big breath' to assist during an abdominal ultrasound and allow the areas underneath the rib cage to be clearly viewed
- During an obstetric examination you may be asked to roll around to encourage the unborn baby to roll into a position appropriate for imaging
- In musculoskeletal ultrasound, the transducer moving over any painful areas often provides valuable insights into the true source of the pain

However, if any of these movements cause you concern or discomfort, you should let the sonographer know immediately.

Are there any after-effects of an ultrasound?

It is rare to have after-effects from an ultrasound examination.

How long does an ultrasound take?

Typically, an ultrasound examination will take about 30 minutes. However, some examinations, may take longer than this because of the detailed imaging that is required and the number and size of the organ/s being examined.

Ask us when making your appointment how long the type of ultrasound you are having normally takes.

What are the risks of an ultrasound?

Ultrasound is a safe examination which provides excellent imaging without any significant risk.

What are the benefits of an ultrasound?

Ultrasound provides excellent imaging of the soft tissues of the human body and is often the best and most appropriate diagnostic test.

It is a safe procedure which does not have the risks associated with imaging that uses radiation. There are no proven harmful effects of sound waves at the levels used in ultrasound performed in our clinics.

Ultrasound can be performed with patient movement so is ideal for imaging babies and children. Ultrasound is

valuable in musculoskeletal (muscles, bones and joints related), breast, gynaecological (women's health, especially of the reproductive organs) and vascular (blood vessel related) diagnostic imaging. Dynamic imaging (moving pictures) provided by images using ultrasound sound waves gives the opportunity for looking at the inside of the body in positions or with movements where there is pain or movement restriction.

Ultrasound usually does not require an injection of contrast medium. Rarely a specific ultrasound contrast medium may be used to detect certain types of diseases or problems. If the radiologist feels this is useful, then this will be explained to you at the time of examination.

Ultrasound is mostly non-invasive, provides accurate imaging tests of the human body, is readily available and relatively inexpensive.

Who does the ultrasound?

The ultrasound examination is performed by a sonographer, a health professional specialised in performing ultrasound examinations. They have a graduate qualification and are fully qualified to perform the examination. The sonographer performs the examination and provides an interpretation of the images on the screen to a radiologist (medical specialist), who will review the sonographer's interpretation and discuss the images with them, before providing a report on the findings to your doctor.

Sometimes, it will be necessary for the radiologist to attend the examination, as it may be important to see the images on the screen rather than just the still photographs and discuss your symptoms.

How do I get my results?

Your doctor will receive a written report on your test as soon as is practicable, normally 1 to 2 days after.

It is very important that you discuss the results with the doctor whom referred you so that they can explain what the results mean for you.

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