



Pelvic Ultrasound Scan (Female)

Your doctor has referred you for an ultrasound scan. The information in this leaflet should explain what will happen before, during, and after this test and also answer any questions that you may have.

What is an ultrasound scan?

An ultrasound scan provides a 'picture' of the inside of the body using high frequency sound waves above the audible range of the human ear (what you can hear). These sound waves pass through the skin and are 'reflected' by the internal organs and tissues producing 'echoes'. These 'echoes' are converted to an image, which appears on a screen. The sound waves are produced and detected by a small hand-held sensor (sometimes called a probe or transducer), which is moved over the skin and is able to show an area at different angles.

Ultrasound can be used to investigate many parts of the body such as the organs of the abdomen (eg liver and kidneys), the pelvis, the heart and major blood vessels.

Are there any risks?

Ultrasound is considered to be very safe and there are no known risks.

Before your scan

It is important to the success of the test that you have a full bladder. This creates a 'window' through which the pelvic organs can be seen. You will find detailed instructions on how much water you should drink on your appointment letter – please read this carefully. If your bladder is not full when you attend, you may be asked to drink more water which could delay your scan.

If you have any questions or concerns about this, please contact the Department of Medical Imaging. You will find our telephone number on your appointment letter.

What will happen during the scan?

You will be asked to lie down on the ultrasound couch. The room lights will be dimmed so that the sonographer can see the screen more clearly. A gel will be applied to your lower abdomen (tummy). This allows the sensor to glide easily over the skin and improves the quality of the ultrasound image. The sensor is moved slowly over the surface of your skin. You may be asked to turn into different positions or be asked to hold your breath while images are taken. The sonographer may have to press the sensor quite firmly. While the scan itself is painless, you may find some discomfort if this is necessary, particularly if you have a full bladder. At the end of the scan, the gel will be wiped off. Although this gel is water based it is best if you do not wear clothing that could mark or stain easily (you will be able to remain in your own clothing and will not need to change into a hospital gown).

Vaginal scan

After the first part of your scan, the sonographer may decide that you should also have a vaginal scan. This is not necessary for everyone. During this type of scan, the sensor lies closer to the pelvic organs to allow them to be seen in greater detail. The sonographer will discuss this with you, but it is your decision as to whether you go on to have this scan. The sonographers know that you might find this embarrassing and will do everything they can to reassure you and make you as comfortable as possible.

You will first be asked to empty your bladder. A special ultrasound sensor will be gently inserted into the vagina. This will feel similar to having an internal examination. This part of the scan will usually take no more than 5 minutes. Your ultrasound examination (including both parts of the scan) will usually take around 20 minutes.

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After your scan

There are no after effects from an ultrasound scan and you will be able to return to your normal daily activities.

When will I get my results?

You will not normally be given the results on the day of the scan. A report will be issued on the findings and this will be sent back to the doctor that referred you. Your doctor should have the results in around 7 days.

Who should I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about your scan or the information in this leaflet please contact the Medical Imaging Department – you will find our telephone number on your appointment letter. We will do everything we can to make your visit as pleasant as possible.