



Abdominal Ultrasound Scan

Your doctor has referred you for an ultrasound scan. This leaflet explains what will happen before, during, and after this investigation and will try to 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 very safe and there are no known risks.

Before your scan

Some special preparation may be necessary depending on the area being investigated. This is usually either fasting (not eating) for a time before the scan, or drinking water before the scan to make sure you arrive with a full bladder. Please read any preparation instructions included in your appointment letter carefully as it will affect the success of your scan. If you have any questions about your preparation, please contact the Medical Imaging Department. You will find our telephone number on your appointment letter.

What will happen during the scan?

You will be asked to lie on the ultrasound couch in a position that will allow the sonographer to examine the area under investigation. The room lights will be dimmed so that the sonographer can see the screen more clearly. A gel will be applied to the area being scanned. 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 over the area being examined. While the scan itself is painless, you may find some discomfort if this is necessary. 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 which could mark or stain easily as you will not be required to change out of your own clothes. The time taken to perform the scan can vary, but is usually between 10 and 30 minutes.

After your scan

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

When will I get my results?

You will not normally be given the results on the day of the scan. A report will be sent to the doctor that referred you. Your doctor should receive the report within 7 working 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.