

Patient guide to ultrasound



Some common questions about ultrasound

What is ultrasound?

Ultrasound is an imaging technique that uses high-frequency sound waves and a computer to see images of various organs, vessels and tissues within the body.

Because it does not involve injecting substances or exposure to radiation, it is a safe, effective way to see the organs as they work and to assess blood flow.

Is ultrasound safe?

There are no known risks to ultrasound. It uses sound waves only and no radiation.

How do I prepare for my scan?

To make sure we can get the best-quality images there are certain things we ask you to do, depending on the type of scan you are having.

Breast scan

It is very important that you bring all previous MRI, mammogram and ultrasound reports and CD images and films on the day of the scan for the radiologist to review. This will give the radiologist a full picture of your breast health.

Upper abdominal scan

For a study of the upper abdomen (liver, gallbladder,

spleen, pancreas) you must not eat for at least four hours beforehand.

During that time, only drink clear, still water or black tea. Do not drink any dairy products (yoghurt, milk and so on) or fizzy drinks.

Lower abdominal scan

For an ultrasound of the lower abdomen (kidneys, ureter, bladder) you must drink 1.5 litres of water one hour before the ultrasound to fill your bladder. It is essential that you have a full bladder at the time of your scan.

Full abdominal (upper and lower) scan

For a scan of the upper and lower abdomen you must not eat for at least four hours beforehand. During that time, only drink clear, still water or black tea. Do not drink any dairy products (yoghurt, milk and so on) or fizzy drinks.

One hour before your scan you must drink 1.5 litres of water to fill your bladder. It is essential you have a full bladder at the time of your scan.

Pelvic exam

For a scan of the pelvic area (pelvis, reproductive or

gynaecological system) you must drink 1.5 litres of water one hour beforehand to fill your bladder. It is essential you have a full bladder at the time of your scan.

Obstetric scan

If you are less than 18 weeks pregnant you must drink 1.5 litres of clear still water one hour before your scan to fill your bladder.

If you are more than 18 weeks pregnant you must drink two glasses of water one hour before your scan to fill your bladder.

It is essential you have a full bladder at the time of your scan.

What can I expect during my scan?

Before your ultrasound begins we will ask you to change into a gown.

A consultant radiologist will do the scan and will make sure you are in the correct position on the examination table. We may dim the lights in the room so that we can see the pictures on the monitor more clearly. Next, the radiologist will put some gel onto the area of your body that they are scanning.

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Some common questions about ultrasound (continued)

What can I expect during my scan? (continued)

For some examinations such as those of the prostate gland, womb or ovaries, it may be necessary to place an ultrasound probe in the rectum or the vagina to look at internal structures.

If you are having an intimate examination the radiologist will describe the procedure to you and will ask your permission to examine you.

In these cases, you may wish for a third person (a 'chaperone') to be present.

How long will it take?

Ultrasound procedures typically take 15 to 20 minutes. More complicated scans may take up to 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the part of the body being scanned.

What happens after my scan?

There should be no side effects and you may eat and drink as usual and return to your daily routine straight away.

How do I get my results?

After your scan, our radiographer will give you a CD to take away, containing your images. (We do not usually issue CDs for non-private patients, unless the doctor or consultant who referred you has asked us to.)

A radiologist will write a report and send it to the doctor or consultant who referred you, usually within 48 hours.

You will need to arrange an appointment to discuss your report with the doctor or consultant who referred you for the scan.

Your report will contain a summary of the radiologist's findings and their recommendations for further follow-up.

Chaperone service

All patients are entitled to have a chaperone present for any consultation, examination or procedure if they feel it is necessary.

The chaperone may be a family member or friend. It may sometimes be necessary for a formal chaperone, for example a trained member of staff, to be present.

Please let us know before your appointment if you want a chaperone.

Any other questions?

If you have any other questions, worries or doubts do not hesitate to ask one of our staff.

We want you to feel as comfortable as possible.

We are committed to providing clean, safe premises for our clients in line with the Health and Social Care Act 2008 - Code of Practice on the Prevention and Control of Infections and related guidance (December 2010) and all other Department of Health guidance.

For more information about the diagnostic centre that you will be visiting, including contact details and directions on how to get there, please visit our website at www.umediagnostics.com