



Section of Diagnostic Ultrasound

PATIENTS ASK.....

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Does ultrasound hurt?

No. You cannot hear or feel ultrasound. During the examination, you will be asked to lie on a bed while the sonographer obtains the necessary diagnostic images using a hand-held transducer. During the scan you will only feel a little pressure from the transducer.

A layer of ultrasound gel is used between the transducer and skin to optimize the transmission and reception of the ultrasound. The gel is water soluble, and does not stain.

From time to time you may be asked by the sonographer to hold your breath or to change your position. This is done in an attempt to obtain the best images.

Why does ultrasound take longer than an Xray?

While a typical Xray exam may take only a couple of minutes, most ultrasounds take from 30 minutes to an hour. Using the hand-held transducer the sonographer must obtain an entire series of images that document the underlying anatomy. Depending on the procedure 20 to 50 images may be required.

If I can't hear ultrasound, what are those noises I hear?

Some examinations require the use of Doppler ultrasound. Doppler ultrasound is very similar to standard ultrasound, but, in addition, allows the sonographer to listen to the blood flow. The sounds that you hear are the Doppler-shifted echoes from the moving blood.

Why did the person sitting beside me in the waiting room get called for their examination before me, when I have been here longer?

Most ultrasound examinations take between 30 to 60 minutes. Appointments are not on a "first-come, first-served" basis. Much effort is devoted to organizing our schedules. Each patient is booked on a specific scanner which is technically best suited to the particular type

of examination. Each patient is booked at a prearranged time on a preselected scanner. As staff resources are very tight, each sonographer is fully booked for the day several weeks/months in advance. Therefore there is little opportunity for flexibility in the schedule.

Every effort is made to keep the schedule on time. Occasionally, patients require more than the allotted scan time due to technical difficulties in obtaining diagnostic information. Sonographers and radiologists can fall behind schedule due to unpredictable findings during a routine examination. These situations require additional time for diagnostic investigation resulting in a longer procedure than was booked. Please be patient with us and be assured that if your examination requires extra scanning time, we will devote the same effort and concern to your needs.

If you are uncomfortable, please mention this to our receptionist who will assist you.

When will I get the results?

During the examination, a number of images are recorded digitally which are later interpreted by a radiologist specializing in ultrasound diagnosis. The sonographers are not medically or legally qualified to interpret the examination results.

After reviewing your images, the radiologist sends a written report to your referring doctor. This generally takes a week to ten days.

If there are findings that require urgent care, the radiologist will inform your physician as soon as possible.

2. ABDOMINAL ULTRASOUND

Why did I have to avoid eating or drinking for this test?

Ultrasound scanning of the abdominal organs can be technically very difficult to perform. This is due to the presence of micro bubbles of air contained in the stomach and bowel. The air reflects and scatters ultrasound waves producing a "fuzzy" or obscured image of the abdominal organs. Fasting prior to the ultrasound examination reduces air artifacts on the image. Also, sonographers always use various patient positioning techniques to minimize the negative effects of air micro bubbles.

3. OBSTETRICAL ULTRASOUND

What is the sex of my baby?

After about five months of pregnancy, the fetal sex organs can often be demonstrated and the fetal sex determined. Occasionally, the fetal position may interfere with our ability to see the genitals. Fetal sex determination is reasonably accurate, but errors can be made.

If fetal gender is identified in the course of the exam this will be noted in the report to your doctor. The sonographer will NOT disclose this information at the time of the scan. Please be aware that this information may be in the report even if you do not wish to know the fetal gender.

Do I need to drink water?

You do not need to drink any water for this test. However, we ask that you do not empty your bladder for at least one (1) hour BEFORE your test.

Can I bring someone of my choosing to see my baby?

Yes, you may bring someone to see the baby. The sonographer will invite your husband, significant other, or friend into the scan room **during the last FEW minutes of the examination**, following completion of the medical examination.

Please understand that to complete a technically accurate and diagnostic examination, the sonographer must obtain a number of measurements and anatomical images. This requires an enormous amount of concentration and an environment free of distractions. It is our policy, that "viewers" remain in the waiting room until the ultrasound examination is completed.

Will I be able to see the screen?

Because of room layout and scanner configuration, viewing of the screen is not ideal for patients while the sonographer is obtaining diagnostic information. When the diagnostic information has been obtained, the sonographer will reposition either the scanner or the bed to enable you to view the screen. It is at this time that the father or other viewer(s) will be brought into the scan room.

Is my baby O.K.?

During the examination, a series of images are recorded which are later interpreted by a radiologist specializing in ultrasound diagnosis. The sonographers are not medically or legally qualified to interpret the examination results. Please refer your questions regarding fetal well-being to your physician.

In the event of fetal death or the detection of a grave fetal abnormality, a radiologist will inform your physician as soon as possible. Frequently, a radiologist will discuss serious findings with patients following completion of the examination.

Can I bring a camera or a video camera?

It is a **Departmental Policy** that cameras are not allowed. We do not allow cameras and video cameras in our department as this compromises confidentiality and privacy for other patients and staff.

Can I obtain pictures?

Pictures are available in CD or print format. Request forms are available at the front desk. There is a fee for this service (payment is made at the HSC cashier on the main floor of the MS building). Picture processing takes a few days and pictures will be mailed.

How long is the examination?

This depends on your stage of pregnancy. As a general rule, we allow up to 30 minutes for pregnancies less than 12 weeks and up to 45 minutes for pregnancies 12 weeks to term. As this is a teaching hospital, you may be scanned by a student sonographer. If this is the case, the exam time will be longer to allow the clinical instructor time to review the examination.

Why is this longer than Fetal Assessment?

The examination protocol differs for fetal assessment vs. biometry and fetal morphology. It takes considerably longer to obtain and record the required measurements.

