

What is an Ultrasound Scan?

An ultrasound scan uses sound waves inaudible to the human ear to examine the tissues of the body. The sound waves pass through many tissues and reflect back to a sensor at interfaces between various tissues and fluid layers. In this way an image of the tissues being examined can be directly seen by the ultrasound operator. Ultrasounds are specialist scans and are carried out either by Radiologists trained specifically in the analysis of ultrasound images or by a specialist sonographer. These images are particularly useful in looking for stones, fluids or cysts within various body structures.

What Happens before my ultrasound scan?

In preparation for an ultrasound, you may be asked either to stop eating or drinking for a specified period prior to the examination or in some cases you may be asked to stop eating but encouraged to drink plenty of fluids! This depends on the exact type of scan requested and the location of the structures to be scanned during the examination. You will need to read the provided information carefully and to follow the pre-scan instructions fully in order to get the required information from the scan.

What happens during my ultrasound scan?

When you attend for the scan, you will need to expose the area to be scanned for the procedure to be undertaken. Your dignity will be protected as much as possible during this time, but some scans can be of an intimate nature.

In order for the sound waves to enter the body a special gel is applied to your skin to help the images be formed as the sound waves which are used to scan the body do not pass through air very well. The gel is harmless and will be easily removed at the end of the examination.

The ultrasound probe is then applied to your body and moved around in order to obtain images of the tissues being scanned. Sometimes it is necessary to apply some pressure to the body to obtain the best images and occasionally they can be a bit uncomfortable. At the end of the examination the images are recorded and saved on the ultrasound machine and a report is produced in response to the questions being asked by the requesting doctor!

What happens following the ultrasound scan?

The ultrasound scan report is created following the scan and a report is written, typed and checked for accuracy by the reporting professional. The report is then authorised for release to the requesting doctor.

Once your report has been received, your doctor may contact you to discuss this further either by phone or by seeing you back in the outpatient clinic. Occasionally the doctor may write to you and your General Practitioner with the results of the scan and possibly further advice or a recommendation for further assessment or treatment.