

Introduction

An ultrasound is a medical imaging procedure using high frequency sound to create pictures to look at soft tissue in your body.

An obstetric ultrasound is an ultrasound that is childbirth-related. Ultrasound is excellent at detailing unborn babies and can be performed at most stages of the pregnancy.

You will be shown into the ultrasound room and asked to lie down on a couch. A warmed clear gel like substance is then applied on your skin on to your abdomen. The sound waves don't travel through air so this allows transmission of the sound waves into your body. A hand-held probe produces sound waves that will form the images. You will be completely unaware of these sound waves and there should be no discomfort during the examination apart from a little pressure.

Ultrasound is generally a painless procedure.

Unlike X-rays, it does not have radiation.

A sonographer will perform the examination.

Preparation

Depending on how far into your pregnancy you are, you will be given instructions on how to prepare for your scan.

Some early pregnancy scans may require you to have a full bladder for your scan. The procedure time will vary depending on the type of exam. Most exams will take around 30 minutes. Some will take 45-120 minutes. This may be dependant on the position of the baby.

Results

A radiologist (a specialist doctor) looks at the images and sends the results to your treating doctor. You need to discuss the results with your treating doctor.

Risks

Ultrasound has been safely used in medical diagnosis for over 40 years. Studies have shown that it is a safe technique with no harmful side effects.

More Information

InsideRadiology by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists:
www.insideradiology.com.au

RadiologyInfo by the American College of Radiology and Radiological Society of North America: www.radiologyinfo.org

ACI Radiology Network:
www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au