

Information for Consumers - Ultrasound

This article tells you about an ultrasound examination, the benefits and the risks, what happens before, during and after having an ultrasound.

What is an ultrasound?

An ultrasound machine has a hand held scanner which is connected to a computer. It uses soundwaves to make pictures of the inside of your body. Some of the things ultrasound is used to look at are:

- Monitoring the health of your unborn child if you are pregnant
- Lumps (eg: a lump on your neck), and biopsies of lumps (eg: taking a very small sample of the lump to see if it is cancer)
- Organs in your body (eg: liver, kidneys, aorta)
- Muscle tendons and ligaments around joints
- Blood flow within your blood vessels



Benefits of an ultrasound

- non-invasive
- generally painless
- does not use radiation
- will help your doctor decide whether there is anything wrong with you

Risks of ultrasound

- There are no known risks
- As ultrasound is not suitable for all parts of the body, a different type of scan may be needed (eg: CT scan)

Preparation

- Bring your referral letter or request form and all x-rays taken within the last 2 years with you
- Leave the x-rays with the radiology staff, as the doctor may need to look at them. The radiology staff will tell you when these are ready to be picked up
- Leave all jewellery and valuables at home

Before coming in for the ultrasound



- You may be asked to fast before the ultrasound
- You may be asked to drink a lot of water before the ultrasound
- You may need a full bladder (eg: asked not to go to the toilet)

Just before the ultrasound

You may be given a gown to wear.

Important to tell your doctor before the ultrasound

If you are diabetic.

What happens during an ultrasound?

You will be asked to lie on a table either on your side or on your back. You will be covered with a blanket, except for the part of your body being scanned.

The ultrasound staff will put a gel on your skin over the part of your body being scanned, so that there is good contact between the probe and your body. They will then place the hand held scanner on top of the gel, moving it around the area being scanned. Sometimes they will need to press, which may be uncomfortable, however this should not hurt.

When your ultrasound is finished the staff will give you something to clean off the gel and ask you to wait while they check the pictures.

The ultrasound usually takes about 20 - 40 minutes including time taken to get ready. Some scans may take longer.

Consent

You have the right to refuse an examination and may do so if you wish. A written consent is generally not required for ultrasound.

When will I get the results?

The amount of time it takes for you to get your results will differ depending on where you get your scans done. The radiology doctor will look at the pictures and write a report. The pictures may be on films or on a CD.

Ask whether you should wait to take the pictures and report with you, or whether they will be sent to your doctor.

Your doctor will need to discuss the report with you. You will need to make an appointment to do this.

After the ultrasound

You will be able to go soon after the ultrasound is finished and can continue with normal activities.

Costs



For an Australian patient in a Public Hospital in Western Australia

- Public patient - no cost to you unless advised otherwise
- Private patient - costs can be claimed through Medicare and your health insurance provider

For a patient in a Private Hospital or Private Imaging Site in Western Australia or a patient outside Western Australia

- Ask your doctor or the staff where you are having your test done what the cost will be

Further information

For more detailed information please access ultrasound from InsideRadiology at:

www.insideradiology.com.au

This is a resource produced especially for consumers by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists: www.ranzcr.edu.au

A guide to gathering information that you may need for making informed decisions is published by the Consumers' Health Council of Australia at: <https://chf.org.au>

Or for other relevant information access the Diagnostic Imaging Pathways website at:

www.imagingpathways.health.wa.gov.au/index.php/consumer-info

Or if you have questions or require any further information please contact your doctor or speak to the staff where you are going to have your procedure.

Consumer participation

This information has been reviewed by representatives from the following groups:

- Aboriginal people
- People with disabilities
- Seniors
- CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse)
- The Health Consumers' Council

Feedback

All feedback, comments and suggestions regarding consumer information at Diagnostic Imaging Pathways are welcome. Please direct them to the following email address: dipfeedback@health.wa.gov.au

Disclaimer

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Date reviewed: July 2017

Date of next review: July 2019