

UnityPoint Health - Finley Hospital Radiology Patient/Family Information
Ultrasound

What is an Ultrasound?

Ultrasound procedures, also called sonograms, are diagnostic tests, which use sound waves rather than x-rays to look inside the body. This is particularly important for the pregnant woman because neither the mother nor the baby is exposed to radiation during this procedure. Just as a sonar unit on a ship can produce a 'picture' of the bottom of the ocean, the medical ultrasound can produce a 'picture' of internal parts of the body.

The procedure itself is painless, but you may feel some discomfort if the exam requires a full bladder.

Preparation

Ultrasounds are used to view many different areas inside of the body. Specific preparation for these exams depends on the type you are having done and is detailed in this brochure. Smoking is discouraged before all of the exams because it produces excessive air in the stomach and bowel, which inhibits the effectiveness of ultrasound.

Pediatric Patients

Age 1-13 years: No preparation is needed unless ordered by your doctor.

Age 14 years and older: See adult preparation for the part of the body to be examined.

Pelvis and Lower Abdomen

A full bladder is required. The patient will need to drink 32 ounces of water at least 1 hour before the exam. **Do not** go to the bathroom after drinking the fluids since the bladder acts as a 'window' and pushes the intestines out of the way for a better view of the uterus and ovaries. The exam usually takes about 30 minutes.

A transvaginal exam maybe done in addition to or in place of, the transabdominal pelvis to better visualize the ovaries and uterus. This is done if the patient is unable to adequately fill the bladder or if the detail is not adequate. The transvaginal probe is inserted like a tampon after the bladder is emptied. It allows a closer look at the ovaries and uterus. The exam usually takes 30 minutes.

Kidney

Do not eat or drink after midnight. One hour before the exam drink two 8-ounce glasses of water. **Do not** smoke after midnight. This exam usually takes about 30 minutes. Do not empty bladder prior to exam.

Gallbladder, Pancreas, Liver

The evening meal before the examination should be fat-free. It may consist of broth, gelatin, fruit and plain vegetables. You are **not** to eat or drink anything after midnight since bowel contents can distort sound waves. **Do not** smoke after midnight. This exam usually takes about 30 minutes.

Aorta

Do not eat or drink after midnight. **Do not** smoke after midnight. This exam usually takes about 30 minutes.

Pylorus

It is preferred that the patient be NPO (no food or drink) for 2 hours prior to the scheduled exam but is not necessary.

Uterine and Fetal Growth, Placenta Location

Drink 32 ounces of water at least one hour before the examination. This exam usually takes an hour. **Do not** go to the bathroom after drinking the water since the full bladder acts as a 'window' and pushes the intestines out of the way for a better view of the uterus and ovaries.

Breast

Any previous mammogram exams and breast ultrasound exams as well as the reports are needed before doing the exam. No preparation is needed. This exam usually takes about 30 minutes.

Carotid

No preparation is needed. This exam usually takes about an hour.

Testicle

No preparation is needed. This exam usually takes about 30 minutes.

Thyroid

No preparation is needed. This exam usually takes about 30 minutes.

Biophysical Profile

A biophysical profile exam is done to visualize fetal motion and fetal breathing and also to access fluid. A technologist applies gel to the skin of the abdomen then uses a transducer to image the area. This exam usually takes about 30 minutes. No preparation is needed. This exam is usually done after a non-stress test (NST).

What Happens During the Test?

The ultrasound is done in Radiology by a special technologist, the sonographer. A gel-like solution, which conducts sound waves, will be applied to the skin of the area to be examined. The sonographer will then place a 'transducer' against the body and slowly pass it over the area to be examined. The transducer transmits and receives the sound waves which are then electronically converted into a 'picture' projected on a special screen much like a TV set. Photographs of the image (picture) are taken for further study.

The procedure is usually completed in about 45 minutes to one hour. If the exam requires a full bladder, the bladder may be emptied as soon as the pictures are finished.

When Will I Know the Results?

The radiologist will review the images shortly after the exam is completed. A written report will be sent to your doctor. Your doctor will discuss these results with you.

Please allow your physician the time needed to review these results.

Name: _____

Exam Date/Time: _____