



## Ultrasound patient information

# What is an Ultrasound?

An ultrasound examination is performed by a trained health professional (a sonographer or doctor) using a small, hand-held device called a transducer (or probe). The transducer transmits ultrasound waves which are relayed back to the machine from parts of the body to give images on the screen.

Ultrasound is particularly useful in pregnancy. There are no known harmful effects from its diagnostic use. The ultrasound machine shows images while moving the transducer (like a movie) on the screen and the images are “frozen” to allow a snapshot to be taken as a record of the examination.

Ultrasounds can be performed on most parts of the body and provide information about a variety of conditions. It can be used to guide biopsy and draining of fluid collections, as well as other interventional procedures.

Your doctor will have explained why an ultrasound is necessary and the best imaging choice for you. Your doctor may feel it necessary for you to have an X-ray or other procedure, as well as an ultrasound.

## Preparation

Depending on the ultrasound that your doctor has requested, you may be asked to fast from food and fluids. Please check the preparation below:

- ▶ **Abdominal Ultrasound** - Fast for a minimum of 4 hours. Small amounts of clear fluids can be consumed.
- ▶ **DVT Ultrasound** - No preparation required.
- ▶ **Pelvic / Gynaecology Ultrasound** - drink 500ml of water 30 minutes before the examination and hold bladder.
- ▶ **Pregnancy Ultrasound before 22 weeks** - 1 glass of water 30 minutes before the examination and hold bladder.
- ▶ **Pregnancy Ultrasound after 22 weeks** - No preparation required.
- ▶ **Renal Ultrasound Protocol** - drink 600ml of water one hour before the examination and hold bladder.
- ▶ **Thyroid Ultrasound** - No preparation required.

## Procedure

To enable good contact between the ultrasound transducer and your skin, a layer of gel is spread over the area to be examined. You will need to lie on the table. After the examination, the gel is simply wiped from your skin to prevent it marking your clothes. The gel is water soluble and is easily washed off.

## Are there any side effects?

An ultrasound examination has many advantages. There is no radiation, which means that it is very safe, there are no known side effects and there is no pain. You may however experience some discomfort and pressure during the examination. The sonographer also applies techniques to ensure that your scan is a safe procedure. For this reason, your scan should only be performed by an accredited sonographer, or trained medical practitioner, and should only be performed when clinically indicated.

There is a possible small risk of infection from internal ultrasound examinations (eg transvaginal or transrectal). This risk is minimised with probe disinfection protocols, which are strictly followed in the ultrasound department and after every examination the probe must pass this strict disinfection process. This disinfection policy complies with Australian Standards.

## Examination and Reporting Time

Ultrasounds take approximately 30 minutes to complete, however may take up to one hour in some cases.

The written report will be sent directly to your referring doctor / team looking after you in hospital, if further copies are required, please advise the sonographer or the clerical team at the time of your appointment. The time it takes for your doctor to receive a written report on the test or procedure will vary.

**It is important that you discuss the results with your doctor or midwife, either in person or on the telephone, so that they can explain what the results mean for you.**

Should you require further information regarding the ultrasound please ask the sonographer.

Unfortunately not all abnormalities are evident on ultrasound and further testing may still be required.

Further information on specific examinations can be found at [insideradiology.com.au](http://insideradiology.com.au).

## For further information about ultrasounds at KEMH

Ultrasound Department - (08) 6458 2830



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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