

# Your child's ultrasound scan

## Information for children, families and carers

This factsheet explains what an ultrasound scan is and what will happen at your child's appointment, so that you know what to expect and can help prepare your child. We hope it will answer some of the questions you may have. If there is anything you don't understand, a member of your child's healthcare team will be happy to explain further.

### What is an ultrasound scan?

An ultrasound scan is a non-invasive test that uses high-frequency sound waves to produce an image of the inside of the body. Ultrasound scans are painless and do not use x-rays, which mean they are very safe for imaging babies and children.

An ultrasound scan will be performed by a radiologist (a doctor who is specially trained to interpret x-rays) or a sonographer (a health professional specialising in ultrasound).

### How does an ultrasound scan work?

A small device called a transducer (a probe about the size of a bar of soap) is used, which gives off high-frequency sound waves. You can't hear these sound waves, but when they bounce off different parts of the body (for example, organs and bones), they create 'echoes' that are then picked up by the transducer and turned into a moving image. This image is displayed on a monitor while the scan is carried out.

### How do I prepare my child for an ultrasound scan?

Preparation for the procedure will vary depending on the type of ultrasound scan your child has. Please refer to the preparation instructions outlined in your child's appointment letter.

### Bring a familiar object with you to comfort your child

You may wish to bring a familiar object with you to help comfort and occupy your child during the scan. For example, a favourite toy, a pacifier (dummy), an electronic device or a book.

## What will happen before the scan?

Please arrive at the children's radiology department at the time stated in your child's appointment letter. If you are unable to keep this appointment, please let us know as soon as possible so we can offer the appointment to another child on the waiting list.

We may ask your child to change into a hospital gown and wait in a cubicle until the ultrasound room is ready. We recommend talking about the scan with your child while they are waiting to help reduce any anxiety.

## What will happen during the scan?

Before we begin the scan, we will ask some questions to confirm your child's identity and the type of scan being done.

We will perform the scan in our ultrasound room. The room may be dimly lit so that we can see the images produced on the screen more clearly. We will position your child comfortably on the examination couch and uncover the area of their body to be scanned. We will then apply a thick gel on your child's skin over the area to be scanned (this may feel a bit cold). This will help us to produce a better quality image. We will move a transducer (a small probe) slowly over your child's skin. The waves generated from the transducer will produce images, which will appear on a display monitor in the room. Occasionally, we may need to apply slight pressure to get a better image. Once we have finished the scan, we will wipe the gel off your child's skin.

We will check that the images contain all the required information before your child leaves the department.

## Can I stay with my child during the scan?

You are welcome to stay with your child during the scan. Children are usually more cooperative and less apprehensive when a loved one is with them.

## How long will the ultrasound scan take?

The length of the procedure will vary depending on:

- the age of your child
- how your child cooperates
- how many areas need to be scanned
- what areas need to be scanned

In most circumstances, the entire procedure will take around 30 to 45 minutes.

## What are the benefits of an ultrasound scan?

An ultrasound scan:

- is usually non-invasive (no needles or injections)
- is widely available
- will produce clear images even when the patient moves, so it is ideal for imaging babies and children
- can be performed on many parts of the body
- is useful for investigating the abdomen and kidneys, or where there is pain on movement

- can be used to monitor an existing condition
- can be used to help make a diagnosis about your child's medical condition
- is a safe procedure that does not use radiation

Your child's doctor, or sometimes a nurse, will decide if they might benefit from having an ultrasound scan.

## What will happen after the scan?

When we have finished the scan, your child will be able to get dressed and resume their normal day-to-day activities, if there is no medical reason for them not to do so.

## Are there any risks?

Ultrasound scans are safe and painless, and have no known side effects.

## When will I receive my child's results?

We will send your child's results to the clinician who requested the ultrasound scan. They will then contact you to discuss the results. If your child's results require urgent attention, we will discuss this with you as soon as possible.

## Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of your child's healthcare team who will be happy to explain further.

If you have any questions before the examination, please telephone the children's radiology department.

Telephone: **023 8120 4429** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm)

## Useful links

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/ultrasound-scan](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ultrasound-scan)

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