

Ultrasound during Pregnancy

In obstetrics, ultrasound is used to exam the growing fetus inside the mother's uterus. In a way, ultrasound serves as a type of physical exam of the fetus. You will have a routine ultrasound called a fetal survey around 19-20 weeks of pregnancy. This in-depth ultrasound will provide valuable information about the fetus' health and well-being, for example:

- Age of fetus
- Whether the size of the fetus is right for its age
- Rate of growth
- Location of the placenta
- Fetal position, movement, breathing and heart rate
- Amount of amniotic fluid in the uterus
- Number of fetuses
- Detection of some types of birth defects
- Gender of the baby, if desired

The effects of ultrasound are continually being studied. There are no known harmful effects to either the mother or the fetus. The long-term risks of ultrasound, if any, are unknown, but there are many potential benefits. It does not involve harmful radiation, drugs, dyes, or chemicals and can detect certain problems accurately and rapidly.

Combined with other test and exams, ultrasound can help your provider make an accurate diagnosis and determine proper treatment for certain problems. Ultrasound is often advised for women who have problems during pregnancy because it enables us to follow such problems more closely, helping to promote your health and well-being during pregnancy.

Preparing for your Fetal Survey Ultrasound

It is best to schedule your fetal survey around 19-20 weeks of pregnancy. This is the time during pregnancy when the fetus is best seen to identify any abnormalities. Scheduling this ultrasound too early in pregnancy may result in a limited view of your baby because of its small size. The ultrasound will be done in our office by an ultrasonographer who is trained and highly skilled in ultrasound during pregnancy. This ultrasound is normally obtained by scanning the abdomen. Sometimes a vaginal ultrasound is necessary if an adequate assessment cannot be performed abdominally.

You will need to drink several glasses of water one hour prior to your ultrasound and try not to urinate until after the procedure. When you have a full bladder, it is easier to obtain better views of your baby's development and your pelvic organs. Usually the only discomfort you will feel is that of a full bladder.

Ultrasound During Pregnancy (Cont'd)

Preparing for your Fetal Survey Ultrasound (Cont'd)

Your partner is permitted to be present during the diagnostic portion of the ultrasound. If you desire for your children and other family members to be present, we ask that you have them wait until the final few minutes of your survey. The diagnostic portion of the ultrasound is very detailed and may last up to 30 minutes. Small children and other family members can become bored with the exam and can also be a distraction to our ultrasound technologist. We want to provide you with the most attentive and highest level of care during your visit, and we appreciate your understanding and cooperation with this request.

Occasionally, there are emergency patients that must be seen before regularly scheduled patients. If you become too uncomfortable during this time of waiting, please check with the receptionist for instructions. We will make every effort to see you at your scheduled appointment time.