

# Transvaginal pelvic ultrasound scan

## Radiology Department



Patient information leaflet

This leaflet has been produced in order to let you know what to expect and how to prepare for your transvaginal (internal) pelvic ultrasound scan.

## **What is a transvaginal ultrasound scan?**

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A transvaginal ultrasound scan is an internal examination, using high frequency sound waves in order to look at your pelvic organs (uterus and ovaries).

The sound waves are transmitted through the body from an ultrasound probe and pictures produced and displayed on a monitor.

A transvaginal (internal) scan involves a probe being introduced a short distance into the vagina. The probe is closer to the pelvic organs and we generally get a clearer and more detailed picture.

## **What are the benefits?**

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It is a relatively simple and usually painless way of assessing the organs inside your body in order to help investigate the cause of the symptoms you may be having.

## **What are the risks of a transvaginal ultrasound?**

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Ultrasound is one of the safest ways of examining the body. It does not use x-rays and numerous scientific studies have provided reassuring evidence that ultrasound imaging is not harmful. (The British Medical Ultrasound Society, 2012).

With all medical procedures there is always some risk involved. With a transvaginal scan there is a small risk of infection and bleeding. Occasionally, the examination may cause some discomfort.

## **Do I need to prepare for my scan?**

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You need an empty bladder for this examination. Please empty your bladder before being called into the scan room. There are toilets in the main entrance of the hospital or ask the Radiology receptionist who can direct you to the nearest toilet in the department.

You should continue to take tablets and /or medication prescribed by your doctor.

You should wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing for your ultrasound examination.

If you require a hoist or your weight exceeds 23 stones (150 kilograms) please contact the radiology appointments office when you receive this appointment.

## **Can you bring a relative/friend?**

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Yes, however, it may not be suitable for a friend to remain in the scanning room whilst you undergo an intimate examination. If you have learning difficulties, please bring a friend or relative with you.

## **Who will do my scan?**

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A specialist doctor (Radiologist) trained in ultrasound or a Radiographer who has undergone specialist ultrasound training (Sonographer) will undertake your scan. We sometimes have trainees in the department who are observing or learning under supervision. This will be indicated to you at the time of scanning. If you feel that you would rather be scanned by the regular staff alone this option will be made available to you and will not affect the way your scan is undertaken.

We have both male and female members of staff, who are specially trained to perform pelvic scans. If you have any concerns regarding this please contact the radiology department prior to the scan.

## What happens during the scan?

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Before the scan starts, the examination will be explained to you and we will ask for your consent for the scan.

You will be asked to undress from the waist down. If you are wearing a skirt you may prefer to just remove your underwear. You will be asked to lie at the end of the ultrasound couch with your feet supported on a chair. You will be given a few sheets of disposable tissue to cover yourself.

The vaginal probe is disinfected before use, covered with a latex-free cover and lubricating gel. The examination is similar to an internal examination performed by a GP, or having a smear test. When you are comfortable, a probe of approximately tampon width is inserted into the lower part of your vagina (approx 3cm). By moving the probe in various directions the pelvic structures are seen and displayed on the screen. While the probe is moved, you may experience some minor discomfort but it is not a painful procedure.

During the examination, a hand may be placed on the lower abdomen to push the pelvic structures nearer the probe so they can be seen more clearly on the screen.

After the scan the gel can be wiped off and you will be able to get dressed.

The procedure is conducted in privacy and takes about 10 minutes.

## Is there an alternative to having an internal scan?

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The best way to view the pelvic organs is by undertaking a transvaginal (internal) scan as more detailed images can be obtained. If for any reason you do not wish to have an internal transvaginal scan or have never had sexual intercourse we can undertake an external scan.

You should attend with a full bladder.

To ensure your bladder is full, you will need to finish drinking 1 litre of clear fluid 1 hour before your appointment time so you arrive with a full bladder. (Avoid drinks containing milk, fizzy drinks and alcohol).  
**Try not to empty your bladder.**

If you get to a point where you are very uncomfortable you may partially empty the bladder but try to retain as much urine as is possible so that the scan can still be performed. Continue drinking in order for your bladder to become full again. If your bladder is not full at the time of your examination your appointment may be delayed or need to be re-booked.

## **How long will the scan take?**

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The scan will usually take between 10-15 minutes. Whilst we will endeavour to ensure you are seen at your appointed time, sometimes emergencies may have to take priority. Please be patient, but feel free to ask the reception staff if you think that you may have been overlooked.

The total time in the department is likely to be 30-40 minutes.

## **What happens after the scan?**

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If you have no further tests scheduled for the same day, you should be able to resume your normal activities.

## **When will I get my results?**

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Usually, your results will not be available after your scan.

Your images will be reviewed after the scan and may need to be discussed with a senior colleague or consultant. The scan report will then be sent to your referring doctor, which is normally within 14 days.

If your follow up appointment is within this time please inform the Radiologist or Sonographer who performed your scan.

If you are attending a 'one stop' clinic the report will be available immediately after the scan for the doctor to discuss with you.

## Answers to frequently asked questions

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You can still have your scan undertaken if you are having your period. If you have a tampon please remove it before your scan.

If you are pregnant there is no added risk to you or your baby.

## Where will I have my scan done?

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Ultrasound scans are undertaken in the Radiology Department at the Royal Surrey County Hospital, Haslemere Hospital or Cranleigh Village Hospital. The hospital you are being scanned at and the time of your scan will be written on the accompanying appointment letter.

## Privacy and dignity

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Sometimes tests, although necessary, can be embarrassing or undignified for patients but we promise to do everything we can to make you as comfortable as possible during your visit to the department. We hope that the information in this leaflet will answer any questions you may have but please feel free to contact us if you have any particular worries, questions or concerns.

## Are there alternative scans I could have instead?

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Your doctor has requested an ultrasound scan as they believe that this is the most suitable scan to assess your organs. It may be that you have other scans or investigations booked as well. If you have any concerns over the type of scan you should be having please call us or speak to your referring doctor for more information.

## Questions and contact details

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Following the examination, if you experience any problems please contact the Radiology appointments office between 08:30 and 16:00. Outside these times please contact your GP.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about this procedure, please contact us before your appointment on **01483 464150** (a direct line).

If you cannot or do not wish to undergo the examination, please advise us as soon as possible on **01483 464150**. Wasted appointments cost the NHS money.

Royal Surrey County Hospital – **01483 464150**

Cranleigh Village Hospital – **01483 464150**

Haslemere Hospital – **01483 782311**

Please be aware that if you are more than 10 minutes late for your appointment we may not be able to scan you and you may have to be rebooked.

## Reference source

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British Medical Ultrasound Society (2012) Statement for the General Public on the Safety of Medical Ultrasound Imaging

- [www.bmus.org/static/uploads/resources/Statement\\_for\\_the\\_General\\_Public\\_on\\_the\\_Safety\\_of\\_Medical\\_Ultrasound\\_Imaging.pdf](http://www.bmus.org/static/uploads/resources/Statement_for_the_General_Public_on_the_Safety_of_Medical_Ultrasound_Imaging.pdf)

## Websites for further information

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For general information about radiology departments visit NHS choices

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

## Special requirements

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If you have any special requirements that we need to consider in order to make your appointment run more smoothly, please contact us before your appointment on **01483 464150**.

If you are unable to keep your appointment notify the Radiology appointments office, giving as much time as possible.

Make sure you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure.

## Contact details

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For further information about Diagnostic Imaging Services at Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, please contact:

### Royal Surrey County Hospital

Egerton Road  
Guildford  
Surrey  
GU2 7XX

[www.royalsurrey.nhs.uk](http://www.royalsurrey.nhs.uk)

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## PALS and Advocacy contact details

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Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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Author: Hariksha Lapham

Review Author: Amanda Wilson

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