

# Ultrasound scan of the abdomen and pelvis



Radiology Department

This leaflet has been produced in order to let you know what to expect and how to prepare for your scan of the abdomen and pelvis.

## **What is an ultrasound scan?**

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An ultrasound scan uses high frequency sound waves to create a picture of the inside of the body. The sound waves are transmitted through the body from an ultrasound probe and the pictures produced are displayed on a monitor.

It is an effective way of assessing the organs in the abdomen and pelvis such as the liver, spleen, kidneys, gall bladder, pancreas, urinary bladder and other pelvic structures such as prostate in men and uterus/ovaries in women.

## **What are the benefits?**

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

## **Are there any risks?**

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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*).

Occasionally, the examination may cause some discomfort.

## Do I need to prepare for my scan?

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- You must not eat for 6 hours before your appointment.
- 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.
- If you have a permanent urinary catheter, please phone the ultrasound department to discuss preparation before your scan.
- You should continue to take tablets and/or medication prescribed by your doctor.
- **If you are a diabetic** you should have an early morning appointment. If your appointment is for a later time please contact the radiology appointments office for advice. If your diabetes is insulin/tablet controlled, follow the instructions in this leaflet but bring your medication (and snack) with you, which you can administer following the procedure.
- 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 are undergoing the 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 staff in our department.

## **What happens during the scan?**

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Our ultrasound rooms are dimly lit to reduce the amount of 'glare' on our ultrasound monitors.

You will be asked to lie on a couch and uncover your abdomen and pelvis. Ultrasound gel will be put on your skin over the area to be scanned – this allows the probe to slide easily and helps to produce clearer pictures. The Sonographer or radiologist will slowly move the probe over your abdomen and pelvis while viewing the images on the screen. Records of selected images will be made which can be viewed later.

You may be asked to hold your breath at times or to change position. Occasionally, there may be a need to press quite firmly in areas that you may be having pain. This will be brief but is necessary in helping arrive at a diagnosis.

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.

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

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The whole examination will usually take between 10 -15 minutes. Whilst we will try to ensure you are seen at your appointed time, sometimes emergencies may have to take priority. We will keep you informed of any delays. 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.

## **Can you eat and drink afterwards?**

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Yes. If you have no further tests scheduled for the same day then you can eat and drink normally and you should be able to resume your normal activities immediately.

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

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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 clinic appointment is within this time please inform the radiologist or sonographer who performed your scan.

## **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 09:00 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.

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

## 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/policies-guides/pg-safety06.asp](http://www.bmus.org/policies-guides/pg-safety06.asp)

## Further information:

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Websites:

- [www.rcr.ac.uk](http://www.rcr.ac.uk) (Royal College of Radiologists)  
[www.rcr.ac.uk/content.aspx?PageID=323](http://www.rcr.ac.uk/content.aspx?PageID=323)
- For general information about radiology departments visit  
The Royal College of Radiologists' website: [www.goingfora.com](http://www.goingfora.com)

## Contact details

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

### Royal Surrey County Hospital

Egerton Road  
Guildford  
Surrey  
GU2 7XX

**[www.royal-surrey.net](http://www.royal-surrey.net)**

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Royal Surrey County Hospital (RSCH) NHS Foundation Trust fully subscribes to the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) *Being Open* best practice framework, November 2010.

## 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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