

Patient Information Leaflet

Having an Upper Abdominal Ultrasound Scan

Produced By: Diagnostic Imaging

Date: May 2013
Review due: May 2016



What is an ultrasound scan?

An Ultrasound scan builds up a picture of part of the inside of the body using sound waves of a frequency above the audible range of the human ear. A small hand-held sensor, which is pressed carefully against the skin surface, both generates sound waves and detects any echoes reflected back off the surfaces and tissue boundaries of internal organs. The sensor can be moved over the skin to view the organ from different angles, the pictures being displayed on a TV monitor screen and recorded for subsequent study.

What does the scan look at?

A scan of the upper abdomen looks at the internal organs including the liver, kidneys, pancreas, spleen, gall bladder and abdominal aorta. This kind of scan cannot look at the bowel.

Are there any risks involved?

No, there are no known risks and it is considered to be very safe.

Do I need to make any special preparation in advance?

In order for the scan to be successful, it is important to have nothing to eat or drink for 6 hours prior to the appointment time. If you feel thirsty, please drink a small amount of plain water only.

If you are diabetic or taking any special medication that will make this preparation difficult, please contact the Diagnostic Imaging Department on 534671 for further advice.

It is suggested for your own comfort during the procedure you consider wearing a two-piece outfit e.g. skirt/trousers and top.

Can I bring a relative or friend?

Yes, you may be accompanied to the department but relatives and friends are normally requested to wait outside the room during the scan.

What happens during the scan?

The radiologist (specialist doctor) or sonographer (specialist radiographer) will ask you some questions about your health and in particular your current symptoms. You will be invited to lie down on a couch, and the lights will be dimmed so that the pictures on the television screen can be seen more clearly. A gel will be applied to your skin over the area to be scanned. The gel allows the sensor to slide easily over the skin and helps to produce clearer pictures.

Sometimes you will be on your back or you may be asked to turn on your side, lie flat on your stomach or even to stand up during the examination. There is always help for those who find this difficult. You may be asked to take deep breaths and to hold your breath for a few moments.

The radiologist/sonographer sits or stands beside you, slowly moving the sensor over your skin while viewing the images on the screen. Records of selected images will be made so that they can be viewed later. Upon completion, the gel will be wiped off and you will be free to get dressed.

Will it be uncomfortable?

Ultrasound itself does not produce discomfort and apart from the sensor on your skin you will not feel anything. Ultrasound is often carried out to try and find out the reason why a patient has severe abdominal or pelvic pain. In these circumstances, some pressure may be applied to the skin surface over an inflamed organ, for example, the gallbladder, to check what is causing the pain. This may increase the amount of pain coming from that organ temporarily, but would be no worse than, for example, being clinically examined by a doctor on a ward.

How long will it take?

The process of carrying out a scan usually takes about 10 – 15 minutes. Unless you are delayed, for example by emergency patients, your total time in the department is likely to be about 30 – 40 minutes.

Are there any side effects?

No. You can drive home afterwards, and return to work as necessary. You can eat and drink normally after the scan.

When will I get the results?

After the scan, the images will be examined further by the radiologist/sonographer, who will prepare a report on the findings. This may take some time to reach your referring doctor, but is normally less than 10 working days. You could ask the radiologist or sonographer how long it will take.

Finally

If you have any questions or concerns that you would like answered, please contact;

(01983) 534666 Monday to Friday
09:00-12:30 and 13:30-16:30

Ask to speak to a Senior Radiographer in Diagnostic Imaging

Access to Health Records by Diagnostic Staff

As a patient undergoing tests as part of a diagnostic procedure information about you may be accessed by other healthcare professionals. It is normal practice in these circumstances for your consent to be implied as part of your agreement to have the test or tests performed.

Accidental over exposure of radiation

Despite all safeguards, medical exposures can occur where the actual dose is greater than was intended. The regulations governing these exposures are either IR(ME)R 2000 or IRR 99. In the event of an over exposure the incident will be reported to the Radiation Protection Advisor. It will be down to the discretion of the RPA as to whether there is a clinical requirement to inform any patient of an overexposure.

If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Quality Team, telephone 01983 534850, who will advise you.

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues through NHS interactive available through Sky TV or online at: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: 111

We Value Your Views On Our Service

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust
St Mary's Hospital
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 03000 61 61 61 or at enquires@cqc.org.uk

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

Ref: **DI/UAUS/4**