



Mid-pregnancy ultrasound

Patient information

What is a mid-pregnancy ultrasound?

A mid-pregnancy screening ultrasound is a general review by ultrasound to examine the development of your baby (fetus) and is part of routine care during pregnancy.

An ultrasound examination is performed by a trained health professional (a sonographer or doctor) using a small, hand-held device called a transducer (or probe). The transducer transmits ultrasound waves that are relayed back to the ultrasound machine to produce pictures on an ultrasound screen. Pictures are taken during the examination, including the number of babies, their size, the position of the placenta, the amount of fluid around the baby, the closed length and appearance of the cervix and to look at major structures of the baby.

Unfortunately, the baby will not always be lying in the best possible position or may still be a little too young (less than 19 weeks) to complete the examination. In these cases, it may be necessary for you to come back at a later date, when the baby is more developed and in a better position.

Most babies have no problems visible on ultrasound. A small number of babies will have a major structural abnormality (2%) and a similar number a minor abnormality (2%), some of which may be visible with ultrasound.

A doctor will explain the significance of any abnormality, either at the time of the scan or at a later clinic appointment. It may be recommended to have further ultrasounds during your pregnancy.

If abnormalities are detected, the ultrasound doctor will review the possible causes with your managing obstetrician, GP or midwife. This will help to guide the discussion between you and your managing doctor or midwife about any further investigation or treatment that may be needed.

Is the mid-pregnancy ultrasound safe?

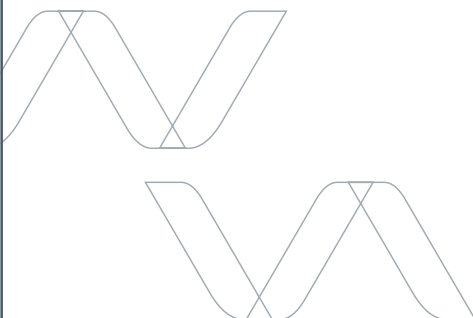
There are no known risks of having an ultrasound to the baby or mother. There is no radiation involved. There are no after-effects of a mid-pregnancy screening ultrasound. You will be able to resume normal activities immediately.

Can I have my scan earlier or later than 19-20 weeks?

The ultrasound can be carried out before or after this time, but it is recommended to have the scan from 19 and a half weeks onwards and preferably before 21 weeks, as this is the best time to see all the structures clearly.

How do I prepare for a mid-pregnancy ultrasound?

You should have some fluid in your bladder, but not be uncomfortably full (usually one glass of water 30 minutes prior to your appointment is sufficient). This is to ensure that the pregnancy and cervix are seen clearly on the ultrasound images.





What happens during a mid-pregnancy screening ultrasound?

The ultrasound room is usually dimly lit to allow the images on the ultrasound screen to be clearly seen. You will be asked to lie on an examination couch. The abdomen is exposed and a clear gel is applied to your skin. This can easily be wiped off after the examination.

A transducer is moved gently across the abdomen with a sliding and rotating action.

During the ultrasound you will be able to see the images of what is happening inside your uterus. You might not recognise or understand some of the images you see, but it is all part of this examination.

The ultrasound is carried out for medical reasons to fully check and assess the development of the baby. Pregnancy ultrasound is complex, because there are many structures in the developing baby that need to be checked and measured. If your cervix appears short or can't be measured accurately, you will be offered an internal (transvaginal) ultrasound. Your sonographer will be able to answer any questions you have about this.

The person carrying out the screening ultrasound will be concentrating very closely on the images as they come onto the screen and might not be talking. Do not be concerned, as they are concentrating on this complex examination.

If I have to come back for another scan, is there something wrong?

No, not necessarily. Reasons for recall include:

- Non-ideal positioning of the baby
- Lower image quality if you have a larger build
- In multiple pregnancies, one baby may be blocking full view of the other.



Sometimes a transvaginal ultrasound is performed to assess fetal structures or your cervix. A transvaginal scan is commonly used to assess the placental position in the third trimester. Because the transducer is closer to the cervix and the baby, it can provide clearer images. If a transvaginal ultrasound is needed, the procedure will be fully explained and your permission requested.

Can I bring my partner or family?

Yes, we would be happy to show the baby to your partner or a family member. This person can be with you during the entire scan.

It is our experience that young children do not benefit from attending the scan and are often a disruption to the parents and the sonographer and some important information might be missed.

It is strongly recommended that if you have young children, you arrange for child care beforehand. Do not bring young children or babies to your scan appointment if there is no one to care for them in the waiting room. There is a limited crèche service available at KEMH. Please see our website for full details about the crèche service.

The examination will take about 30–45 minutes, but may take up to an hour in some cases.

Can I find out the sex of the baby?

If you wish to know the sex of your baby, we can generally provide you this information. On some occasions this is not possible due to technical reasons. You should be aware that assessment of the sex is not 100 percent accurate. If you do not want to know the gender please let the sonographer know.

Can I video the examination?

It is not the policy of WA Health to provide videos of the examination or allow videoing during the examination. If available, we will be happy to provide you with a black and white photo of the baby to take with you.





If the ultrasound is normal, does that mean there are no problems with my baby?

Even in the best of hands not all fetal abnormalities can be seen on ultrasound. In general, 50 to 60 percent of fetal abnormalities may be detected, although some fetal problems have a higher detection rate than others.

When can I expect the results of my mid-pregnancy screening ultrasound?

The written report will be sent directly to your referring doctor/team looking after you in hospital. If further copies are required, please advise the sonographer or the clerical team at the time of your appointment. The time it takes for your doctor to receive a written report will vary.

It is important that you discuss the results with your doctor or midwife, either in person or on the phone, so that they can explain what the results mean for you.

If you are identified with a short cervix, every effort will be made to contact your referring doctor or midwife at the time and you may be referred to them to commence appropriate treatment promptly.

Unfortunately, not all abnormalities are evident on ultrasound and further testing may still be required.

More information

Please ask the sonographer if you would like more information about the ultrasound. Further information on specific examinations can be found at insideradiology.com.au.

For more information about ultrasounds at King Edward Memorial Hospital, contact the Ultrasound Department on (08) 6458 2830 or scan the QR code below.



The information provided is for information purposes only. If you are a patient using this publication, you should seek assistance from a healthcare professional when interpreting these materials and applying them to your individual circumstances.



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