

## What are the benefits of having the test?

Ultrasound scanning is widely available and can be performed quickly. There are no known harmful effects from ultrasound and the examination can be repeated if medically indicated. Pelvic ultrasound can help to identify a variety of problems without exposure to x-rays.

## Are there any alternatives to this test?

There is no alternative equivalent examination. Computed Tomography (CT) Scanning and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) are more complicated investigations which can show more detail of the pelvis.

These scans are prescribed for a few patients where extra information is needed after the ultrasound scan has been performed.

## How can I get more information?

Please ask any of the people involved, particularly the operator performing the ultrasound who will explain the examination and answer any questions you have before, during or after the scan.

Additional information can be found on the internet at [www.goingfora.com](http://www.goingfora.com)

## Additional information for patients with post-menopausal bleeding

For some patients, a pelvic ultrasound scan is performed because they are having postmenopausal bleeding (PMB). Depending on the results of the scan, some patients are referred to see a specialist nurse who may

recommend they have a sample taken from the lining of the womb (uterus).

This minor procedure is called an 'endometrial biopsy' and the specialist nurse will explain in detail what it involves. The biopsy may be taken by the nurse on the same day as your scan but can be arranged for another day convenient to you.

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# Radiology Department

Pelvic Ultrasound Scan



## What is a Pelvic Ultrasound Scan?

This is an examination using ultrasound (high frequency sound waves) to examine the lower abdomen and pelvis. The scan is usually carried out in two parts. The first part is a transabdominal scan for which you need a full bladder. The second part is a transvaginal scan which is performed after you have emptied your bladder. A transvaginal scan will not be performed if you have never been sexually active. Please let the person performing the scan know this.

## How is a transabdominal scan performed?

You will normally be given a booked appointment and asked to attend with a full bladder by drinking approximately 1½ pints of fluid one hour prior to the appointment.

**Try not to empty your bladder until after your ultrasound scan.** The scan can be performed during your period. A trained operator (sonographer or doctor) will perform this examination using specialised equipment. You will be asked to lie on a couch, specialised gel will be placed on the lower part of your abdomen and a small ultrasound probe will be passed over your lower abdomen to create an image of the pelvis on a monitor.

If you are or have been sexually active, in order to obtain good quality images and improve diagnosis, a transvaginal scan will be performed.

## How is a transvaginal scan performed?

First, you will be asked to empty your bladder and then return to the ultrasound examination room.

You will be asked to take off your pants. It is not necessary to take off a skirt, dress, shirt or jumper. In fact, wearing a shirt or long jumper is often easier.

Following this you will be asked to lie down with a cushion under your pelvis and your lower body will be covered with a sheet. A small ultrasound probe is covered with a disposable sheath, lubricated with gel and then the probe placed into the vagina.

Images of the pelvic area, in particular the uterus and ovaries, are obtained. This usually takes approximately 5 minutes.

## Is it painful?

Usually this is described as uncomfortable but not painful. When asked, most women describe it as less uncomfortable than a smear test.

## Should I have a transvaginal examination?

Clearly if you do not wish an internal examination then this will not be performed. You can discuss this with the trained operator when you come for your scan.

However, the quality of the images obtained from an abdominal scan is usually poor by comparison to a transvaginal examination and the quality of the information from the examination less reliable. We do not routinely perform transvaginal examinations on children.

## How long does it take?

The complete examination takes up to 15 minutes.

## What happens next?

The operator may be able to give you some information about the results of the examination before you leave the room, but the full results will be available and discussed with you at your next appointment with your doctors.

## How long will the report take to reach my doctor?

The report will be issued immediately following the examination and sent directly to the doctor that referred you for the scan.

If you are going straight to outpatients, you will be able to take your report with you.

## Are there any risks associated with the test?

The gel that is used for the scan is clean and hypoallergenic so there is a minimal risk of skin reaction. There is a slight risk of allergy to latex but the person doing the scan will check with you first and will use latex free sheaths and gloves if indicated. Finally, there is a minimal risk of cross-infection. However, the equipment is cleaned regularly and the operator wears clean gloves for each patient. In addition just before the transvaginal probe is used a protective, single use cover is unwrapped and placed over it.