

Ultrasound Examination

A gynecological ultrasound examination may be ordered for you by a McKinley Health Center provider or by your personal health care provider (outside of McKinley Health Center). If your outside health care provider wants you to have an ultrasound evaluation performed at McKinley you must have a written order from that provider. If your outside health care provider orders your ultrasound examination, a copy of the ultrasound report and images will be sent back to that provider and you will follow up with him or her. You will also need to sign a release of information form at the time of the examination. This signed release allows us to send copies of the examination results back to the ordering provider.

What is an ultrasound?

Ultrasound uses energy in the form of sound waves that are a frequency higher than the normal range of hearing. These sound waves are transmitted into the body by an instrument known as a transducer, a device that converts one form of energy into another. Sound waves from the transducer are reflected off the internal organs and interpreted by the scanner to create an image on a video display terminal. These images are then printed onto paper, to be recorded as a series of pictures. You are able to see the video display as the ultrasound examination is performed. The words "ultrasound study," "ultrasound exam," and "sonogram" all mean the same thing and are often used inter-changeably by medical personnel. The person performing the ultrasound is called an ultrasonographer. Specific training, certification, and credentials are required before one can become a registered ultrasonographer.

How is ultrasound used?

Ultrasound is a helpful tool to assist your health care provider with your care. A gynecological ultrasound evaluates and measures your uterus, the uterine lining (endometrium), the area behind your uterus (cul-de-sac), the ovaries and the area around each ovary (adnexae). If you are pregnant, an ultrasound examination can be used to confirm the location of the pregnancy, to determine the approximate date of conception and expected date of delivery, and to evaluate the fetus (or fetuses) and the environment in which the fetus is growing. At McKinley Health Center obstetric ultrasound is available only for certain indications during the first trimester of pregnancy (13th week).

The ultrasound images must be interpreted by a specially trained physician for detail, accuracy and relevance to the clinical situation. This physician may recommend additional testing or exams based on the images recorded and the exam findings of the provider who ordered the ultrasound.

Ultrasound is sometimes used in conjunction with other procedures as a diagnostic tool. One test utilizing ultrasound available at McKinley is a sono-hystrogram. During this exam, fluid is introduced into the uterus and images are taken to evaluate the uterine lining. Ultrasound may also be done to help localize or remove an intrauterine contraceptive device.

The exam

The ultrasound examination may be done at any time during your cycle. It is not necessary to reschedule your appointment if you are on your menstrual period. Sometimes your provider will order that the examination be done on a particular cycle day or at a particular time of the cycle.

The ultrasound examination may consist of two parts: the transabdominal (through the abdominal wall) exam and the transvaginal (through the vaginal wall) exam. Sometimes, only one view will be necessary. **It is important to have a full bladder especially if you are unable to have a vaginal exam. If your bladder is not full enough the exam may have to be re-scheduled. Drink approximately 36 ounces of liquid (5 large glasses) 1 to 1½ hours prior to the exam.**

During a transabdominal exam, lubricant will be applied to your abdomen and the transducer will be moved over the abdomen. Sound waves sent out from the transducer enter the body and are reflected back as they come into contact with the internal organs. The only sensation you usually feel with this portion of the exam is firm pressure on your abdomen from the transducer. Remember, this type of exam requires the patient to have a full bladder.

You will be allowed to empty your bladder before the transvaginal portion of the examination is done. The transvaginal examination usually provides more detailed images of the uterus and ovaries.

The transvaginal exam is done with a transducer probe placed into your vagina. You will be shown the vaginal probe before the exam begins and its use will be explained. This portion of the exam should not be any more uncomfortable than a pelvic exam. If you have any pain with either the transabdominal or transvaginal exam you should tell the sonographer. If you feel uncomfortable about having a transvaginal examination you should discuss your concerns with the ultrasonographer.

A McKinley physician who is qualified to interpret ultrasounds will review the images. Results of the ultrasound exam will be given to you by phone or in person, or you may be referred to a physician for further evaluation. If the ultrasound examination was ordered by a health care provider outside of McKinley you will need to contact that provider for follow up instructions.

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: **<http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu>**