

Informed Consent for Ultrasound

What is an ultrasound?

An ultrasound or sonogram obtains images from inside the human body through the use of high frequency sound waves. The reflected sound wave echoes are picked up and converted by a computer into an image that is displayed on a computer screen. An ultrasound test is painless, does not emit ionizing radiation and is one of the safest diagnostic medical examinations available today.

What happens during an ultrasound exam?

The sonographer applies an odorless, colorless gel to the skin above the body structure(s) to be studied. This gel helps conduct sound waves from the ultrasound transducer down to the tissues that are the focus of the study. The sonographer applies the transducer to the skin and short pulses of ultrasound waves are emitted and received.

For some scans, your doctor may instruct you not to eat or drink for as many as 8 hours before your appointment. For other exams, you may be asked to drink water so that your bladder is full when the scan begins.

As the transducer is moved around, an image of the various organs under study appears on a monitor. The sonographer then electronically stores the most diagnostically useful images. Selected images are used by the interpreting physician to make a final diagnosis.

What are some common uses of the procedure?

Ultrasound is used for evaluating the body's internal organs and can help a physician determine the source of pain, swelling or infection in many parts of the body. Because ultrasound provides real time images it can also be used to guide procedures such as needle biopsies, in which needles are used to sample cells from organs for laboratory testing.

What are the benefits vs. risks?

Ultrasound scanning is a noninvasive (no needles or injections) exam which is usually painless, widely available, and uses no ionizing radiation. It provides real time imaging, and can visualize structure, movement and live function in the body's organs and blood vessels. For standard diagnostic ultrasound there are no known harmful effects on humans.

What is Vascular Ultrasound?

Vascular Ultrasound Imaging is a way to evaluate the body's circulatory system. It helps radiologists monitor the blood flow to organs and tissues throughout the body, as well as to evaluate the placement and success of repair, such as after arterial bypass surgery. It can also help identify blockages and abnormalities and help plan for their effective treatment.

What is a Transvaginal Ultrasound?

The transvaginal ultrasound is an important part of a routine pelvic ultrasound examination. During the procedure you will be draped, and the technologist will carefully insert an ultrasound probe into the vagina about half an inch. The transvaginal ultrasound permits better visualization of the ovaries and uterus, does not require a full bladder, and is not affected by body mass. Normally a routine transabdominal examination of the pelvis is performed first. Afterward you will be asked to completely empty the bladder before the transvaginal exam is performed. The exam takes about 10 minutes. There are no known risks to the transvaginal ultrasound and no known bioeffects.