

Dating Scan: Understanding the Early Pregnancy Ultrasound



Highlights

A dating scan is an ultrasound test that helps determine how far along you are in your pregnancy.

It provides an estimated due date (EDD) based on the measurements of your baby.

A dating scan can also confirm if you are carrying one or more babies and check for early pregnancy complications.

You and your doctor or midwife can decide whether to have a dating scan.

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What Is a Dating Scan

Confirm the presence of a single or multiple pregnancies.
Check that the pregnancy is in the uterus and not ectopic (outside the uterus).
Help establish an accurate estimated due date (EDD), which is essential for planning prenatal tests and monitoring the pregnancy.

Reasons for a Dating Scan

You have irregular menstrual cycles.
You are unsure about the date of your last period.
You conceived while using contraception that affected your cycle.
Your baby is born prematurely, as the EDD helps doctors provide appropriate care.
You have not gone into labor by your estimated due date, and induction may be considered.

Timing of a Dating Scan

Necessity of a Dating Scan

Who Performs a Dating Scan

Procedure for a Dating Scan

Abdominal ultrasound: The sonographer applies a gel to your abdomen and moves a handheld probe (transducer) over your skin. The gel helps transmit sound waves, which create images of your baby.

Transvaginal ultrasound: If an abdominal scan does not provide a clear image, the sonographer may use a small, lubricated probe inserted into the vagina. This approach often gives clearer pictures because the probe is closer to the uterus. The procedure may feel slightly uncomfortable but should not be painful.

Preparation for a Dating Scan

Drink water before the scan to fill your bladder, which can improve the clarity of the ultrasound image.

Wear loose clothing that allows easy access to your abdomen.

Safety of a Dating Scan

Interpretation of Dating Scan Results

The location of the pregnancy to confirm that it is in the uterus.

The presence of a heartbeat.

Whether you are expecting one baby or multiple babies.

The early development of the baby's body organs.

Cost of a Dating Scan

Bringing a Partner to a Dating Scan

Questions for Your Doctor

Are there any additional tests I should consider at this stage?

Why are you recommending this test for me?

What should I do to prepare for the scan?

How soon will I receive the results?

Who will contact me with the results?

Tools and Assistance

Ultrasound Equipment: Modern ultrasound machines provide high-resolution images that allow healthcare providers to assess fetal development with great detail.

Ensure that the clinic or hospital has the proper equipment for early-stage scans.

Healthcare Provider Guidance: Your doctor or midwife can assist you in understanding the benefits and limitations of dating scans and guide you through the decision-making process.

Pregnancy Tracking Apps: Many mobile apps help track your pregnancy, offering

features such as an estimated due date based on ultrasound measurements, tracking baby growth, and scheduling prenatal care appointments.

Support Networks: Join support groups for expectant parents who can provide advice and share experiences about dating scans, pregnancy-related concerns, and general support.

Genetic Counseling: If there are any concerns regarding potential genetic conditions or the need for additional tests, a genetic counselor can offer advice and answer questions related to screening and diagnostic tests.