

Everything You Need to Know About Ultrasound Scans During Pregnancy



Highlights

Ultrasound scans are routinely offered during pregnancy to monitor the health and development of the baby.

A morphology ultrasound at 18 to 22 weeks is part of standard prenatal care.

Ultrasound is a non-invasive and safe procedure.

Undergoing an ultrasound scan is optional and up to the individual's choice.

In This Article

What is an Ultrasound Scan?

How an Ultrasound Works

Transvaginal Ultrasound

Reasons to Have an Ultrasound Scan

Timing of Ultrasound Scans During Pregnancy

Additional Reasons for Ultrasound During Pregnancy

Performing the Ultrasound Scan

Safety of Ultrasound Scans

Necessity of Ultrasound Scans

Alternatives to Ultrasound Scans

Preparation for an Ultrasound Scan

Cost of an Ultrasound
Results of an Ultrasound Scan
Meaning of Ultrasound Results
Questions to Ask Your Doctor
Tools and Assistance

What is an Ultrasound Scan?

How an Ultrasound Works

A special gel is applied to the abdomen.
A handheld device, called a transducer, is moved over the skin.
The transducer emits sound waves that bounce off internal structures.
The returning echoes create images displayed on a screen.

Transvaginal Ultrasound

Reasons to Have an Ultrasound Scan

Confirmation of pregnancy and heartbeat
Determining the number of babies
Estimating the due date
Checking the baby's position and growth
Assessing the placenta and cervix

Timing of Ultrasound Scans During Pregnancy

Dating Scan

Confirm a single or multiple pregnancy
Check for ectopic pregnancy

Nuchal Translucency Scan

Morphology Scan

Baby's heart rate and rhythm
Placental position

Cervical length
Baby's sex \(\optional\)

Additional Reasons for Ultrasound During Pregnancy

Pregnancy complications arise
There are concerns about the baby's movement
There is a need to monitor fetal growth

Performing the Ultrasound Scan

Safety of Ultrasound Scans

Necessity of Ultrasound Scans

Alternatives to Ultrasound Scans

Regular check-ups to assess the baby's heartbeat and growth
Non-invasive prenatal testing \(\NIPT\), a blood test that screens for genetic conditions

Preparation for an Ultrasound Scan

Wear loose clothing for easy access to the abdomen.
Drink water beforehand if advised, as a full bladder can improve image clarity.
If undergoing an NT scan, a blood test may also be required.

Cost of an Ultrasound

Results of an Ultrasound Scan

Meaning of Ultrasound Results

Chorionic villus sampling \(\CVS\)
Amniocentesis
Consultation with a genetic counselor

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Are there alternatives to this scan?
Why is this ultrasound recommended?
What are the benefits and risks?
What does the procedure involve?
When will the results be available?

Tools and Assistance

Pregnancy Health Apps: Many apps are available that help track pregnancy milestones, including ultrasound appointments, due dates, and other key health data. These can be useful for managing prenatal care.

Prenatal Education Resources: Various online resources and workshops provide information about pregnancy, ultrasound scans, and maternal health. These resources often feature expert advice from healthcare providers and specialists.

Support Networks and Forums: Connecting with other expectant parents through online forums or local community groups can provide emotional support and shared experiences, which can be particularly helpful when navigating the uncertainties of pregnancy and prenatal testing.

Genetic Counseling: If your ultrasound results suggest potential genetic conditions or other concerns, genetic counselors are available to offer personalized advice and help you understand your options for further testing or screenings.

Healthcare Provider Assistance: Your doctor, midwife, or obstetrician is a critical resource. They can guide you through the ultrasound process, answer questions, and help interpret results in the context of your specific pregnancy.

Insurance and Financial Assistance: Many insurance providers offer prenatal care coverage, including ultrasound scans. If you're concerned about costs, check with your insurer or ask your healthcare provider about options for financial assistance.