

Having an Ultrasound When You Are Pregnant: Brief Version

Why is ultrasound used?

Ultrasound uses sound waves to make a picture of your baby inside your uterus (womb). An ultrasound scan can help your healthcare provider check the health of the baby. Your provider can also use it to look at your uterus, amniotic sac, placenta, and ovaries. You may be able to find out if your baby is a boy or a girl. It is a very safe test. It will not hurt you or the baby.

Ultrasound can help your healthcare provider:

- Find out how far along you are in the pregnancy
- Check the baby's growth
- Know about how much the baby weighs
- Measure the baby
- Check the baby's heart
- Look for movements of the baby

It can also help your healthcare provider check for problems. For example, he or she can:

- Make sure the baby is growing
- Check for some birth defects
- Check for more than 1 baby
- See if the placenta looks normal
- See the position of the baby
- Check for problems with the uterus and cervix

What happens during the ultrasound?

Your healthcare provider may want you to have a full bladder when the ultrasound is done. Before the ultrasound you may be told to:

- Drink about 6 glasses of water an hour before the ultrasound
- Not urinate for the hour before your ultrasound

An ultrasound takes about 15 minutes. It can be done from the outside of your belly. Early in the pregnancy it may be done from inside your vagina.

When the scan is done from outside of your belly, the person doing the test will:

- Put a gel on the skin of your belly
- Then move a device called a transducer slowly over your belly

Sometimes ultrasound is done with a transducer in the vagina. This transducer is shaped like a narrow tube. It is put gently into the vagina with a small amount of gel.

The transducer sends and picks up sound waves. It then makes pictures on the screen. You can see the pictures as the transducer moves over your belly or inside your vagina. If you are not used to looking at ultrasound pictures, it may be hard for you to know what you are seeing. Your healthcare provider can help explain what the pictures show. The scan does not hurt you or the baby.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions about ultrasound or what it shows.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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