

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Ultrasound scans in pregnancy

The aim of this leaflet is to provide you with information about the types of scans we offer during pregnancy.

What is an ultrasound scan?

An ultrasound scan is an examination that uses high frequency sound waves to produce an image of your baby.

Ultrasound gel is placed on your abdomen and a small probe is used to produce a picture on a monitor.

Why do I need a scan?

There are no known risks to you or your baby from having an ultrasound scan. They provide useful information to confirm:

- Whether you are pregnant.
- A baby's heartbeat and movements.
- If you are expecting more than one baby.
- How far into your pregnancy you are and how your baby is growing and developing.
- Where the placenta (afterbirth) is.
- If your baby has a visible physical condition.

When do I need to have a scan?

You will be offered two scans routinely in pregnancy:

1. A dating scan with or without trisomy screening (Down syndrome, Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome)

When you first see your own community midwife, they will discuss trisomy screening with you to help you decide on what type of scan you wish to have. If you choose to have a dating scan without screening, this will be done at around 10-14 weeks of pregnancy, providing you with an estimated date for the birth.

If you choose to have screening for some or all the syndromes (Down syndrome, Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome) the fluid at the back of the baby's neck will be measured during the scan. This is called the nuchal translucency (NT). This test is only offered between 11-14 weeks of pregnancy, and you will need to have a blood test on the same day.

This, along with other information about you such as your age, will inform you about your chance of having a baby with Down syndrome, Edwards' syndrome or Patau's syndrome.

If you are over 14 weeks pregnant, then a blood test can be taken to tell you the chance of having a baby with Down syndrome only.

It is not possible to screen for Edwards' syndrome and Patau's syndrome. If you are over 20 weeks pregnant, it is too late to have a blood test to screen for any of the syndromes.

On leaving the ultrasound room you will be asked to make an appointment for a 20-week scan.

2. The 20-week scan

This scan is a screening test that takes place between 18 and 20 weeks plus 6 days of pregnancy. The scan looks for 11 physical conditions in your baby but cannot find everything that could be wrong. The scan will look in detail at your baby's bones, heart, brain, spinal cord, face, kidneys, and abdomen.

Scans do not pick up 100% of all physical conditions and there is always a chance your baby may have a health condition that was not possible to pick up on at the time of the scan. Some physical conditions are more difficult to see than others, such as heart defects. The scan detection rate is around 50% for diagnosing babies who have heart defects.

In most cases the scan will show that your baby appears to be developing as expected, but sometimes a physical condition is found or suspected. If this is the case the sonographer will explain this to you and refer you to see a screening midwife who can provide you with more information and talk to you about your care.

It may not always be possible to complete the 20-week scan if your baby is lying in an awkward position or if you have a raised body mass index.

A rescan will be offered within two to three weeks to try and complete the scan. Sometimes it is still not possible to complete the scan, and the sonographer will explain this at the time.

More information about scans during pregnancy can be found in the booklet 'Screening tests for you and your baby' which can be accessed online by following this link (type the link into your browser):

www.gov.uk/pregnancy-screening-info

Or by scanning the following QR code with the camera on your phone:



Usually these are the only two scans that we routinely offer. However, there may be times where extra scans are recommended, for example if your baby's growth needs to be monitored. Your community midwife or consultant will talk to you about this.

Who will perform the scan?

Your scan will be performed by a specially trained sonographer, who will need to concentrate on performing the scan and so will not always be able to chat to you throughout the examination.

They will tell you what has been seen at the end of the scan and give you a written copy of the report.

If you have hand-held records please bring these with you to every appointment.

We have trainee sonographers working in our department who may perform your scan under supervision.

It is important you arrive at the scan department on time, otherwise there is a chance you will not be seen, and your appointment will need to be rearranged. If you receive a text message from the Antenatal Clinic with a different time to your scan appointment, please ensure you arrive for the scan appointment first.

Will I need a full bladder?

Yes – for the dating scan. This is especially important during early pregnancy when the uterus is still quite small and lies low in the pelvis. A full bladder helps to push the uterus upwards and acts as a window through which the contents of the uterus can be viewed. It is not so important to have a full bladder when you attend for your 20-week scan.

What type of scan will be done?

The scan is mostly performed by scanning over the abdomen. Sometimes an internal scan called a transvaginal scan may need to be done. This is when a small probe covered in a latex probe cover is placed inside the vagina. This is mostly done during early pregnancy (less than 10 weeks) when the baby is too small to be seen through the abdomen.

This scan may occasionally be done at the time of the dating scan and at the 20-week scan to check the position of the placenta more clearly.

If this is the case the sonographer will talk to you about this.

Who will be allowed to accompany me?

You will be allowed to bring **one** support person with you to attend all scan appointments. No children under the age of 16 are allowed in the scan rooms. If you have any issues around childcare, please contact ultrasound reception to discuss this further.

Can I have a photograph of my scan?

Yes, you can buy a photograph of your baby; the cost is £5 per print, or we offer three photographs for £10.

We have a payment machine where you can buy a receipt in exchange for the photographs – this machine does not give change but does accept coins, notes and debit/credit cards.

Please tell the sonographer as you enter the scan room how many photographs you would like.

Please note that the use of mobile phones is not permitted in the scan room. Taking videos or pictures during the scan is not allowed.

Will I be able to know the gender of my baby?

The purpose of ultrasound scans is not to identify the gender of your baby. However, if you would like us to, we will look for the gender at the 20-week scan after we have completed all the physical checks. If you have asked us to assess the gender, we cannot guarantee that we will get the gender of your baby correct.

If your baby is lying in an awkward position, or you have a raised body mass index, it may not be possible to see the gender and no further scans will be offered. We will not tell you the gender of your baby unless you ask to be told. If you do want to know the gender of your baby, we will tell you and write it on the ultrasound report.

Please note we will not be involved in any gender reveals and will not write the gender on pieces of paper or card. Please do not ask this of the sonographer.

What if I still have some questions?

If you still have some questions after reading this leaflet, do not hesitate to call the ultrasound department and ask to talk to a sonographer. Alternatively, please speak to your community midwife or consultant.

Flu and whooping cough vaccines

You will be able to access a seasonal flu vaccine (between October and March) after your dating scan and the whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine after the 20-week scan. Please check in on Antenatal Clinic reception after these scans. Your community midwife will be able to provide more information about these vaccines if you require.

Contact numbers:

- Antenatal Ultrasound Department
King's Mill Hospital
Telephone: 01623 622515, extension 3211
- Ultrasound Department
Sherwood Women's Centre
Newark Hospital
Telephone: 01636 685779

Further sources of information

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

National leaflet (Screening tests for you and your baby) in English and other languages:

www.gov.uk/pregnancy-screening-info

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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