

Southernex



Imaging Group Ltd

June 2004

18 WEEK ULTRASOUND

Patient Information

Ultrasound examinations are routinely performed at around 18-20 weeks of pregnancy. Although you may have already had a scan earlier in your pregnancy, the 18-20 week scan is considered the best time to examine foetal development.

It is important that this scan is not performed any earlier than 18 weeks of pregnancy, since the structures that need examining may not be seen clearly if the scan is done too early (e.g. 16 or 17 weeks of pregnancy).

The 18-20 week ultrasound examination is performed by a sonographer, who is a person specifically trained in ultrasound. Interpretation and reporting of the scan is performed by a radiologist, who is a doctor skilled in reading ultrasounds, and other types of diagnostic images.

The ultrasound image is produced by the reflection of sound waves. Sound waves are sent into the body via a transducer, which is a small hand-held device placed on the mother's abdomen. A moving black and white image appears on the ultrasound screen allowing the sonographer to examine the baby. There are no x-rays involved in an ultrasound examination, and there are no known harmful effects from the diagnostic use of ultrasound, therefore it is the imaging modality of choice in pregnancy.

Preparation

At some clinics you may be required to fill your bladder. You will be informed of the appropriate preparation when you make your appointment.

Examination Time

The scan generally takes between 20 to 45 minutes depending on how the baby is lying during the examination.

Procedure

You will be asked to lie on a couch for the scan, and may be asked to change into a gown. The sonographer places the transducer on your abdomen, after applying a water-based gel to the area. The sound waves will not travel from the transducer into the abdomen without the application of the gel. Moving pictures are produced on the ultrasound screen and the sonographer records the examination via still pictures that are stored onto film.

There are many structures that need careful examining during the scan, for example, the baby's brain, heart, spine and limbs. Measurements of the baby's head, abdomen and limbs are taken to check its size. The sex of the baby is not routinely assessed, but the sonographer will endeavour to do this at your request. Sometimes it is difficult to determine the sex of the baby if it is not lying in the right position.

The ultrasound examination requires a great deal of concentration by the sonographer. In order to concentrate, some sonographers prefer to take all the necessary pictures first, then turn the ultrasound screen towards you, so they can show you the baby and explain its different features. Other sonographers may explain the baby's features whilst they take the relevant pictures. Either way, you will have the wonderful opportunity of seeing your baby. Unfortunately, legal requirements restrict us from videoing the ultrasound examination.

You are most welcome to bring your partner to the pregnancy scan. Some patients also like to bring along other family members. If you are bringing small children, please bring an accompanying adult to supervise them. If more than one person comes to the ultrasound examination, the sonographer may choose to bring them into the ultrasound room only at the end of the examination, so the initial part of the scan is spent focusing on the important task of examining your baby.

Once the examination is finished, and you have had the chance of looking at your baby, the images the sonographer has recorded are shown to the radiologist. Sometimes the radiologist also comes into the ultrasound room to have a look at your baby before doing a report on the examination. The films and the radiologist's report are usually ready for you to take back to your doctor after about one hour. Alternatively, in some cases the films and report can be delivered directly to your doctor.

For further enquiries about this procedure, contact our rooms at:

Aspley (07) 3263 5355

Caboolture (07) 5495 2077

Caboolture Hospital (07) 5498 3055

Clayfield (07) 3262 8588

Gympie (07) 5482 1196

Hervey Bay (07) 4124 3133

Indooroopilly (07) 3378 8033

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