Ultrasound

What is an ultrasound?

An ultrasound is a safe and painless procedure used to look at the organs inside the body. It uses high-frequency sound waves and their echoes to create video pictures of the organs. It is especially useful for soft tissue, such as the kidneys, liver, and uterus.

How do I prepare for ultrasound scanning?

In general, you do not need to do anything special to prepare for the scan. Some specific tests, such as an ultrasound of the uterus, require a full bladder. If preparations are necessary, your healthcare provider will give you instructions.

What happens during the procedure?

High-frequency sound waves pass through the body from a small device called a transducer placed on your body. A gel is usually put on the skin to improve the contact between your body and the transducer. The transducer is connected to a computer with a display screen. As the sound waves pass through the body, they are reflected by body organs and create echoes. The computer converts these echoes into images of the body organs. A special ultrasound, called Doppler ultrasound, is used to check movement in organs, for example, blood flowing through blood vessels. Generally an ultrasound scan takes 15 to 60 minutes to complete.

What happens after the procedure?

Usually you can go home and go back to your normal activities as soon as the scan is done. You may be able to have the results within a few minutes to a few days later.

What are the benefits of this procedure?

- Ultrasound scans help your healthcare provider to see some of the inside of your body.
- Ultrasound waves are considered very safe. There are no known side effects, even for pregnant women and children.
- No medicines are known to interfere with the test results.
- The scans are fast and painless.
- The scans do not use radiation.
- Ultrasound avoids possible hazards of some other tests used for diagnosis (such as bleeding, infection, or reactions to chemicals).

What are the risks of this procedure?

There are no known risks associated with ultrasounds because the sound waves used are not dangerous.

Source: MD Consult