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[www.plymouthhospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.plymouthhospitals.nhs.uk)

## **Information on having an Outpatient Ultrasound Scan**

(Including abdominal, thyroid, and testicular ultrasound, studies of joints, muscles and blood vessels. Please note, this leaflet does not apply to scans of the female pelvis, pregnancy scans, endoscopic ultrasound, ultrasound guided injections or biopsies, or scans of your heart)

### **This information sheet is to let you know what to expect regarding your general ultrasound scan.**

Ultrasound is a painless and relatively simple way of examining inside your body. The scan usually lasts between 10 and 20 minutes.

### **Do I need to prepare for my scan?**

It depends, and your appointment letter should explain this clearly. If you are not sure please contact us at the number below.

In order to see some of the abdominal organs it is normally important that you have nothing to eat or drink for six hours before your appointment. You can still drink small amounts of plain water and take your normal oral medication.

For most other scans no preparation is required.

### **Where will I have my scan done?**

Your appointment will be at Derriford Hospital, the Radiology Academy, or the Cumberland Centre in Devonport. Please refer to your appointment details. If you are arriving at Derriford by car you should note that parking charges apply and it can take a while to find a space and then walk to the hospital. You should probably allow at least 20 minutes for this and booking in at reception.

The Derriford ultrasound department is on level 6 (the same as the main entrance). From the entrance go up the concourse and turn right by the Body Shop. Please report to the X-Ray West reception desk.

### **Who will do my scan?**

Your examination will be done by one of our highly trained staff. Some are specialist doctors (radiologists) who have trained in ultrasound, others are radiographers with specialist ultrasound postgraduate qualifications. We sometimes have trainees in the department who are observing or learning under supervision. We will always identify trainees to you and give you the option of being scanned instead by regular staff. If you choose this it will not in any way affect your treatment.

### **What happens?**

You may be asked to undress and put on an examination gown and dressing gown. (Dressing gowns are provided but if you prefer you may bring your own.)

For scans of the arms, neck or legs it may be sufficient to roll up or remove outer layers of clothing.

You will be asked to lie on a couch and uncover the area to be scanned. A harmless gel is put on your skin to allow the sound to enter the body more effectively. The person performing the scan will place the transducer (probe) on your skin and move it over the region to be scanned. They will watch a screen and record images. You may be asked to hold your breath at times or to change position. Occasionally, there may be a need to press quite hard in areas that may be where you are having pain. This will be brief but is necessary in helping arrive at a diagnosis. After the scan the gel will be wiped off and you will be able to get dressed.

### **Are there any harmful side effects?**

Not as far as anyone knows, ultrasound is thought to present no real risk. Unlike X ray and CT scanning it does not involve the use of ionising radiation and there have been no recorded harmful effects at the power levels used for medical diagnosis. At higher power levels some slight local heating of tissues can occur, but within our practice this should not exceed 1 or 2 degrees centigrade, and is usually very much less.

### **How do I get my results?**

Normally the results will be sent to the doctor who sent you for the scan. There is often a need for us to review the images and perhaps consult with a senior colleague before a final report is made. If you wish to know the result, please feel free to ask the person doing the scan, but sometimes the result cannot be given to you immediately. If this is the case you will be told how and when the results should become available.

### **Records of the scan.**

The images recorded during your scan, and other necessary personal details, are kept as part of our records. These are stored electronically in a database. There are strict controls on how this data is used and the Trust ensures procedures are in place to protect this information. Images may be used for teaching doctors and allied professional groups within the hospital, but no identifiable images will be published more widely without your permission.

### **Who should I contact if I need more Information?**

If you have any further queries about your scan appointment please contact the ultrasound appointments clerk at Derriford (this applies for Cumberland Centre scans also) The number is **(01752) 439287**

***Please also call this number if you have any special needs that we can help with when you attend for your scan.***

### **Further information on the Internet**

- A list of Frequently Asked Questions relating to ultrasound is available at...  
<http://www.plymouthhospitals.nhs.uk/ourservices/clinicaldepartments/Documents/Frequently%20Asked%20Questions.pdf>
- Alternatively an excellent description of having a scan in a “virtual hospital” prepared by the Royal College of Radiologists can be found at...  
<http://www.goingfora.com/radiology/ultrasound.html>

**For a large text version of this leaflet please  
contact (01752) 439287**

### **How useful did you find this information?**

We would like you feedback on this information leaflet. Please send your comments to:  
The Imaging Support Manager  
X Ray West, Derriford Hospital  
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