

ULTRASOUND EDUCATION

Ultrasound exams use sound waves to make pictures of the inside of the body. The exams do not use x-rays to make these pictures. The images are made in “real-time,” so they can show movement and body parts inside of the body. The exam shows pictures in thin, flat sections. Other types of ultrasound pictures are used to check blood flow through your veins and arteries. This flow is shown by red and blue on the pictures.

Common uses for ultrasound include:

- Looking for a cause of pain or infection
- Checking an area of swelling
- Checking internal structures in the abdomen and pelvis
- Examining breast tissue
- Guiding needles during tissue sampling



At UNM Hospitals Radiology Department, only licensed technologists are allowed to perform ultrasound imaging. Students work directly with certified technologists.

GETTING READY FOR YOUR TEST

You could be asked to move your clothing away from the area being imaged or to change into a gown. Exam preparations are different for each exam. You may be asked not to eat or drink for several hours before your test. For other exams you might need to drink a specific amount of water before your test to make sure you have a full bladder. You will be told before your appointment what you will need to do.

HOW IS THE TEST DONE?

The tech will take you to the exam room where your test will be done. They will have you lie down on the exam table. They will put a clear gel on the area where they are to take pictures. A hand-held device will be placed on the gel and moved across the area. To make pictures the device sends out small pulses of sound waves into your body. It then listens for the sound waves to bounce off body parts. The device records changes in these sound waves as they bounce off your tissue. For certain exams, the tech may need to place the device in an opening of your body such as the vagina. There is usually no pain during the test, but if you are tender, you may feel pressure or minor pain. Many pictures will be taken with the device in different positions. The images are viewed by the technologist during your exam and saved on the computer. When your exam is done, the gel is wiped off your body and then you can get dressed.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER MY ULTRASOUND IS DONE?

A radiologist, a doctor specifically trained to read radiology exams, will evaluate your ultrasound and send written results to your doctor. You will get your results from your doctor, not from the staff in Radiology.

Ultrasound exams are scheduled procedures performed at three different locations. Exams may be scheduled at UNM Main Hospital, Carrie Tingley Hospital or the Outpatient Surgery and Imaging facility, OSIS, depending upon the type of exam and age of the patient.

Ultrasound of the Kidney