



Obstetric Ultrasounds

As technology improves, so too does our ability to assess fetal growth and development during pregnancy. Ultrasound continues to provide us with the best and safest means of performing this assessment.

Ultrasound is performed by placing a scanner or transducer on the skin. Gel is applied to the skin first to enhance the ability of the sound waves to penetrate the skin and enter the soft tissue. The transducer emits high frequency sound waves (unheard by the human ear) that are able to penetrate soft tissues and then return. The ultrasound machine then interprets sound waves that return and an image is formed.

The most commonly used technique is placing a transducer on the abdomen and receiving information from above. Another approach, especially early in pregnancy, is by using a vaginal transducer. The transducer is placed in the vagina, allowing close proximity to the part to be seen, providing maximum accuracy.

The ability of equipment today allows us to not only see activity, but to sometimes assess structures such as the heart and umbilical cord with color. This provides information about not only the presence of blood flow within, but also about function. Most typically assessed structures and information include:

- Fetal age
- Fetal number
- Position
- Placental location
- Amount of amniotic fluid
- Fetal size and comparison to gestational age
- Growth
- Movement
- Breathing
- Heart rate
- Some birth defects

Please let us know if you have questions about the types and purposes of any ultrasounds you may be scheduled for.