



Ultrasound Scanning in Pregnancy

What is ultrasound scanning?

Ultrasound scanning is a procedure that uses sound waves to create pictures of the uterus, placenta, and fetus. There is no exposure to radiation and no known risk. Early pregnancy scans are done using a vaginal transducer covered with a clean, disposable sheath. There is no discomfort, risk of infection or harm to the pregnancy using this technique. Later pregnancy scanning is done with an abdominal transducer.

Ultrasound scanning may be used:

First trimester - to make sure the baby is developing in the uterus and not inside a fallopian tube (ectopic pregnancy) and to determine how far along you are in your pregnancy (due date) and determine the number of babies present in the uterus.

Second trimester - to check on basic fetal anatomy and the position of the placenta.

Third trimester - to help estimate the weight of the baby, to check the position of the baby and the placenta, to check the amount of amniotic fluid and to look for fetal movement and breathing.

What are the limitations?

Ultrasound scanning cannot detect all birth defects. Ultrasound examinations performed at Los Olivos are related to the above purposes only. A normal ultrasound in this office does not assure the absence of birth defects or abnormalities. If you are at high risk for having a baby with a congenital anomaly, you should see a perinatologist for a detailed ultrasound. A detailed ultrasound is usually performed for women over 35 with or without an amniocentesis. Additional screening tests such as Nuchal Thickness Screening, AFP triple marker screening, non-invasive prenatal screening (NIPT), amniocentesis, and CVS can help to detect some birth defects, but no screening test or diagnostic test can detect all birth defects.

When is it used in pregnancy?

Not all pregnancies require routine ultrasound exams and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology does not consider it necessary for all pregnancies. Some insurance carriers do not reimburse for elective ultrasound screening of a normal pregnancy. If any other reason for ultrasound scanning arises, the ultrasound is more likely to be covered according to the details of your health insurance policy. I understand the indication for my ultrasound today. I understand the limitations of ultrasound screening and wish to continue with the test. I have had all my questions answered.

Patient _____ DATE _____

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