Ultrasound

You are scheduled for an ultrasound at UW Health. Allow time to park and find the reception area. Sometimes emergency exams need to be worked into our schedule. We are sorry for any delays this may cause.

Ultrasound uses sound waves to create pictures of many areas inside of the body. No x-rays or special dyes are used, and it should not hurt.

Getting Ready
Wear comfortable clothing. You may be given a hospital gown and asked to partly undress. This will depend on the type of ultrasound you have. For some exams you are told not to eat or drink for six hours before your exam.

If you are having an ultrasound-guided procedure, you will be called by a nurse who will give you more information. It is very important to follow the directions you are given. Your exam may be cancelled if you do not follow the directions.

During the Ultrasound

1. The sonographer (person who does the exam) asks you a few questions about your symptoms.
2. You are asked to lie on a table in a room with dim lighting.
3. Gel is put on your skin near the area of the exam.
4. A small, hand-held device (probe) is slid over your skin.
5. You may be asked to change position or hold your breath to help get the best view.
6. You may feel some mild pressure from the probe. Tell the sonographer if you feel any pain.

After the exam, the sonographer and doctor review the images to ensure results address the order indication. The doctor may come into the scan room to ask you more questions or do a brief scan. Most exams take 30-60 minutes.

Special Types of Ultrasound
Female patients having their uterus or ovaries looked at may have a special probe placed into the vagina. This provides better pictures. Please tell the sonographer if you have any latex allergies.

Ultrasound that shows blood flow in the veins and arteries is called a Doppler. During a Doppler you may see colors on the screen and hear swishing sounds.

Ultrasound can also be used to help with other procedures done in the room. The doctor explains the procedure and asks you to sign a consent form. The healthcare team may also help in some special procedures. This is explained by the sonographer. You are closely watched by the radiology staff before, during and after your procedure.

After the Ultrasound
If you do not have more tests, you can go back to your normal routine. You may eat or drink right afterward. The results are sent to your doctor, who then calls you to explain the results and choices of treatment.

Who to Call
If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan.

For a list of UW Health Clinics, please visit www.uwhealth.org/.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 4/2026. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4334.