

Ultrasound: Abdominal Exam

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains how to prepare for an abdominal ultrasound exam, how it works, what you will feel during the exam, and how to get results.

What is an abdominal ultrasound exam?

Ultrasound uses sound waves to make images of the inside of the body. An abdominal ultrasound can help doctors diagnose problems in the liver, gallbladder, biliary system (bile ducts), spleen, pancreas, kidneys, and bladder. Ultrasound images also show the blood vessels in the abdomen.

How does the exam work?

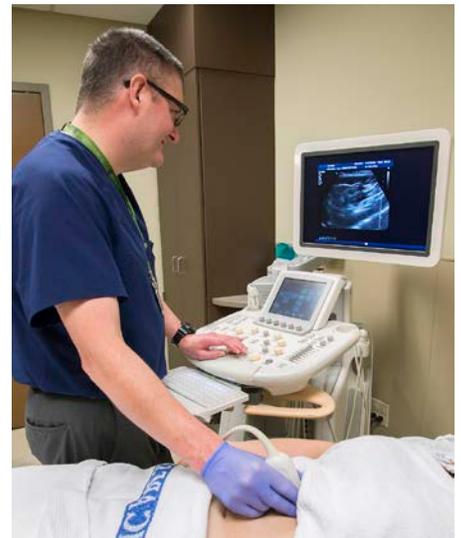
The *sonographer* (ultrasound technologist) uses a hand-held device called a *transducer*. This device sends and receives sound waves.

First, gel is applied to your skin on your abdomen (belly). This gel helps the transducer make contact with your skin. The sonographer then lightly presses the transducer against your skin.

As the sound waves bounce off your body fluids and tissues, they create an image of the inside of your belly. Your doctor views this image on a monitor.

How should I prepare?

- Wear a loose-fitting, comfortable, 2-piece outfit. Only your belly needs to be exposed during the exam.
- **Do not eat anything for at least 6 hours before your exam.** It is OK to drink clear liquids such as water, black coffee, apple juice, or tea with no milk or cream.



During your ultrasound exam, the sonographer will lightly press the transducer against your skin.

What can I expect during the exam?

- You will lie on your back on an exam table.
- The sonographer will move your clothing away from your belly and apply a warm gel to the area.
- The sonographer will then press the transducer against your skin and move it around to take the images.
- If needed, the radiologist may take more pictures after the sonographer is done.
- The exam usually takes less than 45 minutes.

What will I feel during the exam?

- There is little or no discomfort during an ultrasound exam of the abdomen.
- You will feel the sonographer apply warm gel to your belly. You will feel slight pressure as the transducer is moved over your skin.
- You may be asked to roll on your side, or change your position.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist who specializes in ultrasound will review the images and send the report to your referring doctor. You will receive your results from the doctor who ordered the test. The radiologist may talk with you about early findings when your exam is over.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- UW Roosevelt Imaging Services: 206.598.6868
- Harborview Imaging Services: 206.744.3105