

Children's Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound

Consumer Information

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What is a Children's (Paediatric) Abdominal Ultrasound?

A Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound is an examination of the abdomen with an ultrasound machine that uses sound waves to form images of different organs within the child's body. The sound waves cannot be heard by the human ear and cannot be felt by the child having the ultrasound study.

Abdominal Ultrasound studies are most commonly performed to investigate the causes of abdominal pain or whether there is a mass of tissue or "lump". This type of study is particularly useful in examining the liver and kidneys but can provide very useful information about other organs.

How do I prepare my child for a Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound?

Food and air in the stomach and intestines makes an Abdominal Ultrasound study difficult to perform and interpret so the most important preparation is for your child not to eat before the Abdominal Ultrasound study.

The length of time your child will need to go without food will depend on their age. Very young children will only be asked to fast for as little as 3 hours but older children will be asked to fast for up to 10 hours. This can be difficult for some children and parents. It is often best to make the ultrasound appointment early in the day so the child is awake for as little time as possible without being able to eat.

If your child takes medications with clear liquids, these can be taken as normal before the ultrasound scan. If your child needs to take medication with food, you will need to discuss with your doctor, the timing of the medication and ultrasound study.

Your child should wear clothes that allow the abdomen (stomach area) to be exposed easily from the lower chest to the skin crease where the legs "join" the pelvis and lower abdomen.

What happens during a Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound?

A transducer (a small, smooth, hand held device), which converts electrical energy from the ultrasound machine computer to sound waves, is placed on the

abdomen and moved gently back and forth over the skin to show different parts of the body.

A clear gel is used to make the transducer contact closely with the skin and allow it to slide smoothly across the skin over the abdomen. The sound waves which are bounced back from the body to the transducer are converted back to electrical energy, which is then analysed by the ultrasound machine computer to make an image which can be seen on the video screen of the ultrasound machine.

Your child will lie down on an ultrasound bed, usually on his or her back for the examination. Sometimes, the **sonographer** (the person performing the ultrasound scan) will roll your child into different positions or ask your child to roll into different positions depending on your child's age. Older children will sometimes be asked to take a deep breath, or hold his or her breath for a short time to get as clear a picture as possible on the ultrasound screen.

Are there any after effects of a Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound?

The ultrasound waves used for diagnostic ultrasound examinations cannot be felt by humans and do not cause any harm.

The gel used in the study washes off in water and should not mark or stain clothing. It may dry as a white powder on your child's skin.

Your child will not feel any different before, during or after the test, and can return to school, kindergarten, or child care after the study provided there is no medical reason not to do so.

How long does a Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound take?

The time taken for the ultrasound varies with the age and level of cooperation of the child and the reason for the scan. However, it would usually take about 20-30 minutes including time for the person performing the study to check the quality of the images is satisfactory.

What are the risks of a Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound?

A Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound study is a safe procedure which causes no harm.

If there is a lot of gas in the abdomen or the child is unable to hold still, some organs or areas inside the body may not be seen properly and the examination may not give all the information your doctor was expecting to receive. For example, the ultrasound examination may not always show the cause of your child's symptoms and further investigation(s) may be necessary.

What are the benefits of a Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound?

An ultrasound study is ideally suited to babies and children as there are no potentially harmful X-rays and the ultrasound examination can be performed without the child having to be sedated, to hold completely still or without the child having to alter their breathing (although sometimes older children may be asked to take a deep breath or hold their breath for a short time).

Ultrasound studies have no side effects and can show some organs very easily.

Who does the Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound?

Ultrasound examinations are performed by a [radiographer](#) (also known as a medical imaging technologist - MIT) or doctor who has undertaken special training in ultrasound. The radiographer is often called a [sonographer](#), and a doctor who performs the ultrasound examination is sometimes referred to as a sonologist.

The images are usually obtained by the sonographer under the supervision of a [radiologist](#). A radiologist is a specialist doctor trained to interpret the images and provide a report to your doctor. It is not uncommon for the radiologist to also examine your child or watch some of the images being taken.

Any doctor is allowed to use an ultrasound machine to assist in the investigation of clinical problems, but their use of an ultrasound machine will probably be limited to their special areas of interest.

Where is a Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound done?

Ultrasound examinations are usually performed in a private radiology practice or in a public or private hospital. Some ultrasound examinations are undertaken in a hospital ward, operating theatre or theatre recovery ward as modern ultrasound equipment is able to be moved to a patient if necessary. Some doctors have their own ultrasound machines in their consulting rooms and may use it as part of their examination of your child.

When can I expect the results of my child's Paediatric Abdominal Ultrasound?

The time that it takes your doctor to receive a written report on the test or procedure your child has had will vary, depending on:

- the urgency with which the result is needed
- the complexity of the examination
- Whether more information is needed from your child's doctor before the examination can be interpreted by the radiologist
- Whether your child has had previous X-rays or other medical imaging that needs to be compared with this new test or procedure (this is commonly the case if your child has a disease or condition that is being followed to assess your child's progress)
- How the report is conveyed from the practice or hospital to your child's doctor (in other words, email, fax or mail)

Please feel free to ask the private practice, clinic, or hospital where your child is having his or her test or procedure, when your child's doctor is likely to have the written report.

It is important that you discuss the results with the doctor who referred your child, either in person or on the telephone, so that they can explain what the results mean for your child.

Please note:

This information is of a general nature only and is not intended as a substitute for medical advice. It is designed to support, not replace, the relationship that exists between a patient and his/her doctor. It is recommended that any specific questions regarding your procedure be discussed with your family doctor or medical specialist

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