

Pelvic/Gynaecology Ultrasound Scan

What is a pelvic or gynaecological ultrasound?

This is an ultrasound that examines the organs of the female pelvis. This includes the ovaries, the cervix, the uterus/womb and the lining of the uterus (referred to as the endometrium) It is completely safe and uses sound waves, not ionising radiation such as that used for x-rays or CT scans.

Why might I need a pelvic ultrasound?

Common reasons for this are;

- Pelvic pain or painful periods
- Heavy periods or abnormal bleeding
- Pelvic mass
- Infertility
- Postmenopausal bleeding
- Pain or bleeding following delivery of a baby or after a miscarriage

- Assessment of IUCD/Mirena position

What can be seen on the scan?

- Abnormalities with the uterus such as fibroids
- Ovarian cysts, masses or polycystic ovaries
- Abnormalities with the endometrium like polyps or abnormal thickening
- Abnormal fluid adjacent to the uterus or ovaries

How is it performed?

Both transabdominal and transvaginal scanning is recommended for adequate views of your pelvic structures.

Transabdominal scanning is performed by placing a probe and gel on the skin of your lower abdomen. This provides a good overall assessment of pelvic organs and not a lot of detail. A transvaginal scan involves a sterilised, covered probe being gently placed into the vagina whilst you are covered. This usually provides clearer images of the pelvic structures as this probe lies closer to the uterus, ovaries and cervix. It is less uncomfortable than a PAP smear. You will always have the choice about whether this is performed.

Do I need a full bladder?

Fluid in the bladder allows clearer images to be obtained during transabdominal scanning. It allows a “window” for the scan and moves your bowel out of the pelvis helping better visualisation. Your bladder needs to be partially filled (your bladder should not be so full that it causes you pain).

Emptying the bladder 2 hours before the examination and drinking 1 litre (3-4 glasses) of water over the next hour and holding until your appointment is advised. You will be allowed to empty your bladder before the transvaginal scan begins.

What if I am bleeding/have my period at the time of the scan?

It is not always possible to time your appointment after your period or when you are not bleeding, particularly if you have irregular bleeding or periods. A pelvic ultrasound can be performed at any stage of the menstrual cycle. Ideally make an appointment just after you expect your period to finish. This is a good time of the cycle to assess the lining of the uterus/endometrium. Your doctor will let you know if there is a particular time in the cycle that you should attend.