

## Ultrasound: Pelvic Exam

### *How to prepare and what to expect*

*This handout explains how to prepare for an ultrasound exam of the pelvic area. It includes how the exam works, what happens during the exam, and how to get your results.*

### What is a pelvic ultrasound?

*Ultrasound* exams use sound waves to create images of the inside of your body. A *pelvic* ultrasound checks the health of the organs in your pelvic area (lower belly).

A *sonographer* (ultrasound technologist) uses a hand-held *transducer* for this exam. This device sends and receives sound waves.

### How does the exam work?

First, the sonographer will put ultrasound gel on your lower abdomen (belly). This thick gel helps the transducer make contact.

The sonographer will then press the transducer against your skin. As the sound waves bounce off your body's tissues, images will be created. Your radiologist will view these images on a monitor.



*Talk with your radiologist if you have any questions about your ultrasound exam.*

### Pelvic Exam for Women

Women may have 1 or both of these exams:

- In a *transabdominal exam*, you may feel some discomfort from the pressure of the device on your full bladder.
- In a *transvaginal exam*, the transducer is placed into the vagina. This helps your doctor see certain structures more clearly. For this exam, you will need to empty your bladder. Most women find this exam more comfortable than a manual pelvic exam.

Your referring doctor or radiologist will decide whether you will have 1 or both of these exams, based on your needs.

## How should I prepare?

On the day of your exam:

- Wear a loose-fitting, 2-piece outfit. Only your lower belly needs to be exposed during the exam.

## How is the exam done?

- We will ask you to lie on your back on an exam table.
- Then the sonographer will:
  - Move your clothing away from your lower belly.
  - Apply warm gel to your lower belly.
  - Press the transducer against your skin and move it over your lower belly.
- If needed, a radiologist may take more images 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 with ultrasound exams. You may feel some discomfort from having a full bladder.
- You will feel the sonographer apply warm gel to your belly and move the transducer over your belly.
- We may ask you to roll on your side, or to change positions.

## Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

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

You may also read your results on your eCare Results page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.

You and your provider will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

### 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