

WHAT IS AN OBSTETRICAL ULTRASOUND?

Obstetrical ultrasound provides pictures of a fetus within a woman's uterus, as well as the mother's uterus and ovaries. A Doppler ultrasound study may be part of an obstetrical ultrasound examination. During an obstetrical ultrasound the examiner may evaluate blood flow in the umbilical cord or may, in some cases, assess blood flow in the fetus or placenta. An obstetrical ultrasound can be done transabdominal or transvaginal.

HOW IT WORKS

Transvaginal ultrasound is performed very much like a gynecologic exam and involves the insertion of the transducer into the vagina after the patient empties her bladder. The tip of the transducer is smaller than the standard speculum used when performing a Pap test. A protective cover is placed over the transducer, lubricated with a small amount of gel, and then inserted into the vagina. Only two to three inches of the transducer end are inserted into the vagina. The images are obtained from different orientations to get the best views of the uterus and ovaries.

WHAT TO EXPECT

You will lie on the exam table face up. You may be asked to remove some or all of your clothes and to wear a gown during the test. A clear waterbased gel is applied to the area of the body being studied to help the transducer (ultrasound probe) make secure contact with the body and eliminate air pockets between the transducer and the skin that can block the sound waves from passing into your body. The ultrasound technologist then presses the transducer firmly against the skin in various locations, sweeping over the area of interest or angling the sound beam from a farther location to see an area of concern better. Images are captured on a monitor and later reviewed by the radiologist.

The scan takes approximately 45 minutes.

RESULTS

A radiologist will review your images and send a report to your doctor who ordered the test in 48 hours. You'll get a call from your doctor's office to discuss the results and next steps. To check your results in our secure, online patient portal, My UNC Chart, visit www.myuncchart.org.