

Ultrasound

What is ultrasound?

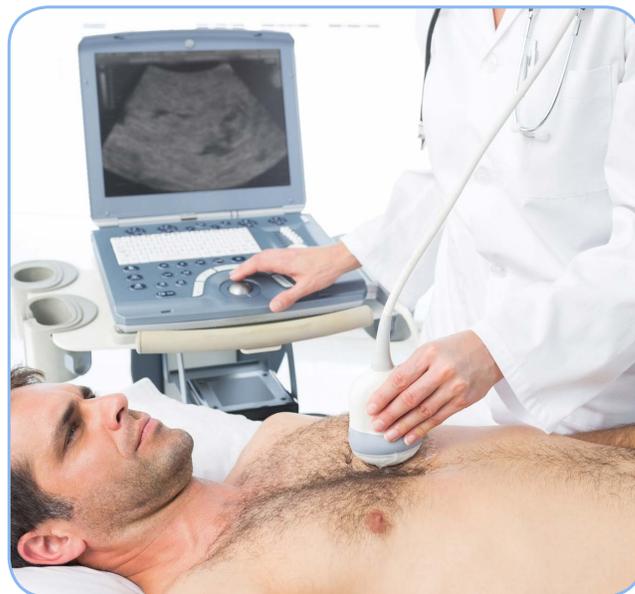
Ultrasound is an imaging test that uses sound waves to see what may be happening inside your body. It is sometimes called a **sonogram**.

Ultrasound is used to look for disease or dysfunction in the body's internal organs and tissues. During the test, the doctor or technician may:

- Track the movement of fluids through blood vessels or ducts
- Examine a growing baby in a pregnant woman
- Analyze movement in a joint
- Guide other diagnostic tests, such as biopsies and catheter placement
- Diagnose heart conditions or look for damage after a heart attack

How is it done?

An ultrasound is usually painless and does not use ionizing radiation like an x-ray. Instead, a device called a transducer is moved over the part of your body that needs to be examined. A slippery gel is used on the skin to help the transducer move easily over the area. The transducer sends sound waves into your body. The sound waves bounce off of your organs, tissues, and fluids and are sent back to the transducer. The transducer sends that information to a computer that creates pictures of the area being studied.



What are the risks?

The level of risk depends on what type of ultrasound you are having. In general, ultrasounds that are **noninvasive** (outside the body) have few or no risks. Ultrasounds that are done inside the body (for example, in an artery or your esophagus) carry more risk. Ask your healthcare provider about all the risks for your situation before your test.

How do I prepare?

In most cases, you don't need to do anything special to prepare for an ultrasound. However, your doctor may give you specific instructions about eating and drinking or going to the bathroom in the hours before the procedure. Wear loose, comfortable clothing to the exam. You may be asked to wear a gown.

