

ULTRASOUND FOR PATIENTS

The Risks and Hazards of Diagnostic Imaging Services

WHAT IS DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING?

The term “diagnostic imaging” is used to describe a range of tests that involve taking pictures or images of internal organs in order to diagnose an injury or disease. Diagnostic imaging plays an important role in the diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of health issues for our community.

Diagnostic imaging tests include:

- Ultrasound
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)
- Radiography (X-ray)*
- Nuclear Medicine imaging*
- Computed Tomography (CT)*
- Positron Emission Tomography (PET)*

*These tests will expose you to ionising radiation.

For the purposes of this guide, “diagnostic imaging” refers to gynaecological and obstetric ultrasound, including abdominal, pelvic and vaginal scanning, performed by the doctors at our practice.

When attending Alana Healthcare, our doctors may utilise ultrasound as a tool to assist in the diagnosis of your medical condition. All of our doctors are Fellows of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG), and have met the minimum credentialing requirements for the provision of diagnostic imaging services. Our doctors will only provide ultrasound services to you within the framework of our Clinical Policies and Procedures and recognised Diagnostic Imaging Standards, and with your consent.

This guide will explain to you the benefits and possible risks associated with the provision of diagnostic imaging services at Alana Healthcare, how it affects you, and to answer any questions you may have about this service.

WHY DO I NEED TO HAVE AN ULTRASOUND?

Ultrasound can take high quality images of many parts of your body, which makes it an excellent diagnostic tool.

An ultrasound examination may be recommended by our doctors at the time of your consultation for the following reasons.

1. Pregnancy
 - For confirming the age of the baby and to predict the due date;
 - To look at the baby as it develops throughout the various stages of pregnancy;
 - To screen for chromosomal and other abnormalities (such as Down syndrome).
2. Examination of abdominal, pelvic or other organs
 - Weakness (such as prolapse or incontinence);
 - Endometriosis and pelvic pain;

- Fibroids in the uterus;
- Cysts in the ovary or elsewhere.

Ultrasound is not suitable for all parts of the body, and therefore a different type of diagnostic imaging test may on occasion be required. In these instances, our doctors will refer you to an external diagnostic imaging service.

WILL I BE EXPOSED TO IONISING RADIATION DURING MY ULTRASOUND?

No.

Ionising radiation is radiation containing enough energy to cause damage at a cellular level in the human body. We are all exposed to ionising radiation from our environment in our daily lives (from the sun, rocks, plants, building materials, etc). This is known as “background radiation”. Ionising radiation is used during some diagnostic imaging examinations.

Ultrasound uses high frequency sound waves to obtain an image of inside your body. Ionising radiation is **not** used to perform an ultrasound.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS OF ULTRASOUND?

Ultrasound is a safe examination which provides excellent imaging without any significant risk to you.

In most circumstances there should not be any after effects from an ultrasound examination. Occasionally, you may feel a little tenderness in the area that has been examined, but this is uncommon and generally does not persist beyond the first hour after the examination.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ULTRASOUND?

- Ultrasound provides excellent imaging of the soft tissues of the human body and is often the best and most appropriate real-time diagnostic test;
- Ultrasound examination is generally painless;
- Ultrasound is a safe procedure which does not have the risks associated with imaging that uses ionising radiation. There are no proven harmful effects of sound waves at the levels used in ultrasound;
- Ultrasound can be performed with patient movement, making it ideal for imaging babies. Imaging movement is also very valuable in gynaecological ultrasound where movements can assist with diagnosis;
- Ultrasound does not require an injection of contrast medium;
- Ultrasound is mostly non-invasive, provides accurate imaging tests of the human body, is readily available and relatively inexpensive.

PREPARING FOR YOUR ULTRASOUND

For ultrasound examinations performed by our doctors at Alana Healthcare no preparation is required.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN ULTRASOUND?

Before any ultrasound examination is performed a copy of this guide will be available to you. Your doctor will also explain the procedure you are having in detail and answer any questions you have before they start the examination.

You will be asked to lie down on the examination table. You will be covered with a towel, except for the area to be examined. Gel is applied onto the skin at the area of your body which is being imaged. Your doctor will then place the “transducer” (a smooth hand held device) onto this area using gentle pressure. The transducer is moved across the area with a sliding and rotating action to allow the image to project onto the screen. Sometimes they will need to press, which may be uncomfortable, however this should not hurt.

Your doctor will take still photographs from the moving images on the screen.

During the examination you may be asked to perform some movements to improve the quality of the imaging. These movements will be simple, and if any cause you concern or discomfort, you should let your doctor know immediately.

When your ultrasound is finished your doctor will give you tissues to clean off the gel and ask you to get dressed. An ultrasound may be performed in conjunction with other assessments such as pelvic or vaginal examinations.

In some instances, the best way to examine the pelvic organs in detail is by performing a transvaginal ultrasound, in which the ultrasound transducer is on the end of a thin probe which is inserted into the vagina. Your doctor will explain the process in detail and ensure that you are happy to have it performed this way. The probe being used is disinfected and sterilized in between each use, and covered with an approved protective sheath, in line with our Infection Control policy.

A transvaginal ultrasound will only be performed if you consent to the examination.

REPORTING

Clinical findings at the time of ultrasound examination will be recorded in your electronic health record. Findings will be reported to your referring doctor as part of the reply letter sent to them.

PRIVACY, STORAGE OF AND ACCESS TO ULTRASOUND IMAGES

Any images captured during your ultrasound examination will be stored in your electronic health record, and kept in accordance with State and Federal privacy legislation under which you have rights of access and correction. Images remain the property of Alana Healthcare. Your electronic health record is a permanent legal document and we take its security very seriously. Any requests for accessing your electronic health record must be in writing and authorised and signed by you.

COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH ULTRASOUND

If an ultrasound is performed as part of your consultation to aid in the diagnosis or management of your medical condition, you will be charged a fee on top of the normal consultation fee. Our doctors operate independently of one another and therefore set their own fee schedules based on their experience and level of expertise.

Our reception staff can advise you of the cost of having an ultrasound with any particular doctor. Medicare rebates apply.

INFORMED CONSENT

The aim of this guide is to inform you of the benefits and risks associated with gynaecological and obstetric ultrasound, as well as provide information about what to expect during an ultrasound examination.

You have the right to refuse an ultrasound examination and may do so if you wish. Written consent is generally not required for ultrasound. In the event that you refuse your doctor's recommendation for ultrasound, this will be documented in your electronic health record.

FEEDBACK

Alana Healthcare is committed to providing a professional and friendly service, and we value your feedback. If you would like to provide feedback on this information sheet, or any other aspect of our diagnostic imaging service, please complete the attached form and send to:

Practice Manager
PO Box 3353
St Pauls NSW 2031
e carolyn@alanahealthcare.com.au
t 02 9009 5255

f 02 9009 5244

Customer feedback and complaints form

Please tick the nature of contact	<input type="checkbox"/> Compliment	<input type="checkbox"/> Feedback	<input type="checkbox"/> Complaint
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Contact Details	
Name:	
Address:	
Phone Number:	
E-mail:	
Compliment / feedback / complaint reported to:	
Date:	
Summary:	
If applicable, what outcome are you seeking?	
Would you like to be contacted regarding your comments?	