



# Pelvic Ultrasound

## *How to prepare for your exam*

**Pelvic ultrasound exams are used to detect problems with the pelvic organs. Read this handout to learn how to prepare for the exam, how the exam works, how the exam is performed, what you will feel during the exam, and how to get your results.**

### **What is pelvic ultrasound imaging?**

Ultrasound is used to view the organs by sending sound waves into the body. The sound waves are captured and displayed on a screen. For women, pelvic ultrasound is used to check the uterus, ovaries, fallopian tubes, and nearby structures. In men, the pelvic ultrasound is used to study the bladder and the prostate gland.

### **How does the exam work?**

Ultrasound sends sound waves into the body using a transducer, a hand-held device that sends and receives sound waves. After gel is applied to the skin, the sonographer (technologist) presses the device against the skin to obtain pictures, which then appear on a screen. As the sound waves echo from the body's fluids and tissues, an image is formed.

### **How should I prepare for a pelvic ultrasound?**

- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing for your exam.
- In most cases, you will be asked to drink a quart of water before your exam to fill your bladder. A full bladder helps to locate the uterus, ovaries, and bladder during the exam.

### **How is the exam performed?**

1. You will lie on an exam table, with your clothing moved away from the lower abdominal area.
2. Warm gel is applied to the abdomen to make contact between your skin and the transducer.
3. The sonographer then presses the transducer against the skin and sweeps it over the abdomen to obtain pictures.
4. The radiologist may obtain more pictures after the sonographer is done.

## Questions?

Call 206-598-6200

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

Imaging Services:  
206-598-6200

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## What will I feel during the exam?

Pelvic ultrasound is relatively painless. In most cases, there are two parts to the pelvic exam; transabdominal and transvaginal. With the transabdominal ultrasound, you may feel some discomfort due to the pressure of the device on your full bladder. The sonographer will apply warm gel to your skin, and will sweep the device along your skin to obtain the pictures. Transvaginal ultrasound (where the transducer is placed into the vagina) may be done to view certain structures more clearly. For this exam, you will need to empty your bladder. A vaginal ultrasound is usually more comfortable than a manual pelvic exam.

Each method has its advantages. Your referring doctor or radiologist will decide if using one method or both is best for your needs.

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

The radiologist who specializes in ultrasound will review the pictures and send the report to your doctor. You will receive your exam results from the doctor who ordered the test. The radiologist may discuss preliminary findings with you at the end of your exam.

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