

Preparing for a Pelvic Ultrasound

What is a pelvic ultrasound?

A pelvic ultrasound is a scan that looks at the organs and structures in your pelvic area. It lets your healthcare provider look at your:

- Uterus
- Cervix
- Vagina
- Fallopian tubes
- Ovaries

Your provider can also use Doppler ultrasound to look at how blood is flowing in certain pelvic organs.

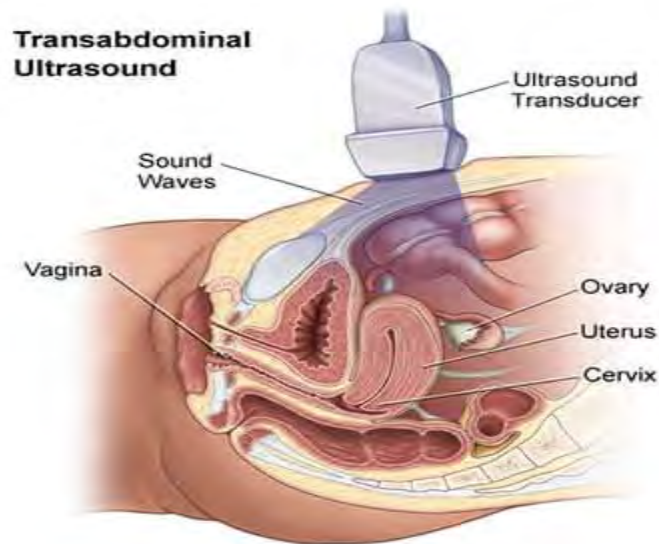
An ultrasound uses a device called a transducer to send out sound waves that are too high to be heard. The transducer sends the sound waves through your skin and other body tissues to the organs and structures within. The sound waves bounce off the organs like an echo and return to the transducer. The transducer picks up the reflected waves. These are changed into a picture of the organs.



Why might I need a pelvic ultrasound?

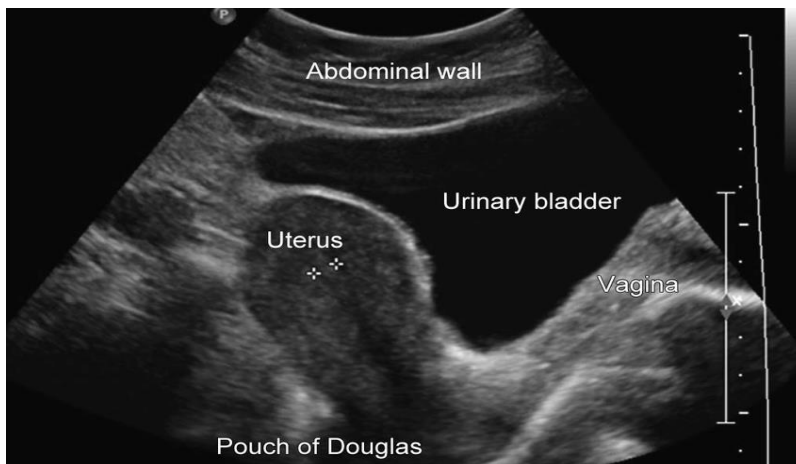
You may need a pelvic ultrasound so your healthcare provider can measure or look at your pelvic organs. Your provider may use the ultrasound to look at:

- The size, shape and location of your uterus and ovaries
- The thickness and density of tissues and organs in your pelvis
- Fluids or masses in your endometrium, the muscles of your uterus (myometrium), your fallopian tubes or your bladder
- The length and thickness of your cervix



- Changes in the shape of your bladder
- Blood flow through your pelvic organs

Pelvic ultrasound can give your healthcare provider lots of information about the size, location and structure of pelvic masses. Ultrasound can't give a definite diagnosis of cancer or any other specific disease.



Your healthcare provider may use pelvic ultrasound to help:

- Find problems in the structure of the uterus, including endometrial conditions

- Find fibroid tumors (benign growths), masses, cysts and other types of tumors within the pelvis



- Find an IUD (intrauterine contraceptive device)
- Diagnose pelvic inflammatory disease or other types of inflammation or infection
- Find the cause of bleeding after menopause
- Watch your ovaries when you are treated for infertility
- Collect fluid and eggs from egg sacs (follicles) in the ovaries for in vitro fertilization
- Diagnose pregnancy that happens outside of the uterus, usually in a fallopian tube (ectopic pregnancy)
- Watch how your fetus is growing during pregnancy
- Look at certain fetal conditions

Your healthcare provider may also use ultrasound to help with other procedures such as endometrial biopsy. Transvaginal ultrasound may be used with a procedure called sonohysterography. For this, your uterus is filled with fluid so that your provider can get a better image.

Your provider may have other reasons to recommend a pelvic ultrasound as well.

What should I expect during a pelvic ultrasound?

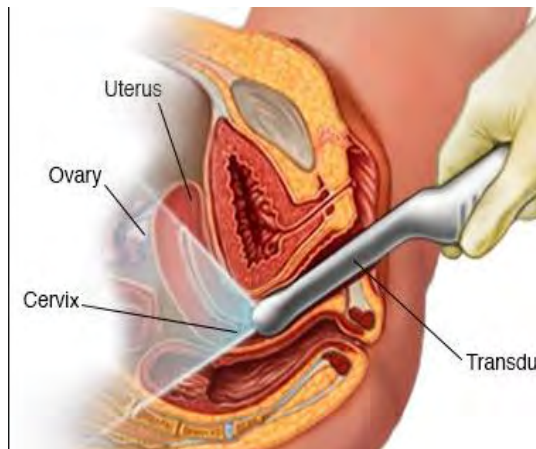
The ultrasound technologist puts a clear gel on your skin and moves the transducer on the gel. The gel lets the technologist move the transducer smoothly over your skin. It also helps conduct the sound waves.

Pelvic ultrasound may be done in two ways:

- **Transabdominal** – In this method, a transducer is put on your belly using the gel.



- **Transvaginal** – In this method, a long, thin transducer is covered with a plastic or latex sheath and gel. The transducer is then put into the vagina.



The type of ultrasound procedure you have depends on why you need it. You may need only one type of pelvic ultrasound, or you may need both to help your healthcare provider make a diagnosis or give you treatment.

How should I get ready for a pelvic ultrasound?

- Your healthcare provider will explain the scan to you. Ask any questions you have about the scan.
- Tell your provider if you are sensitive or allergic to latex.

- You can usually eat and drink as normal before the scan. You will not get medicine to help you relax or go to sleep, unless the ultrasound is part of another procedure that needs anesthesia.
- Wear clothing that you don't mind getting gel on. The gel put on your skin during the scan does not stain clothing, but some of it may stay on your skin after the scan.
- For a **transabdominal ultrasound**, you will be asked to drink several glasses of water or other liquid one to two hours before the scan. Don't empty your bladder until the scan is over.
- For a **transvaginal ultrasound**, you should empty your bladder right before the scan.
- Follow any other directions your provider gives you on how to get ready.

This information is provided by Inova Imaging Services.