

Nuchal Ultrasound

How long will the procedure take?

A nuchal translucency ultrasound usually takes around 30 minutes to complete.

Preparation

You should have a full bladder for the exam. Empty your bladder 2 hours prior to your examination, then drink 1 litre of water at least 1 hour before your exam. Do not empty your bladder. Drinking water prior to the examination will enlarge the bladder, enabling the surrounding internal areas to be seen.

It is a good idea to wear comfortable clothing that allows easy access to your lower abdominal area.

If you have any related previous images from another provider please bring them on the day.

Disclaimer:

The information contained in this brochure is intended as a guide only. If patients require more specific information please contact your referring Doctor.

Image of a Nuchal Ultrasound



A 12 week old foetus showing a nuchal translucency measurement at the back of the neck.



Radiology



Swan Hill
District Health

my hospital

For more information contact:

Radiology Department
Swan Hill District Health
Swan Hill 3585
Ph: (03) 5033 9287

Publication Date: February 2013

What is a Nuchal Ultrasound?

A Nuchal Translucency Ultrasound is an ultrasound used to screen for a risk of Down syndrome or other chromosomal or inherited disorders in the foetus.

The test combines three important pieces of information to provide you with a “combined risk” that the foetus may have one of three specific chromosomal abnormalities, including the most common; Down syndrome.

The scan must be performed between 11 weeks 0 days to 13 weeks and 6 days.

Nuchal Translucency is the name for the fluid behind the neck of a foetus. A NT scan uses ultrasound to measure the amount of fluid. A foetus at risk of Down syndrome tends to have a higher amount of fluid. The thickness of the fluid can predict whether the foetus may have Down syndrome or a number of other chromosomal abnormalities.

The measurement of fluid in the back of the neck is one of the pieces of information to identify risk, combined with your age and the results of a blood test that assesses three proteins in the mother’s blood. These three pieces of information are combined to produce a statistical risk of Down syndrome or other chromosomal abnormalities in the foetus.

Procedure

You will be asked to lie on an examination bed. Water-based gel is applied to the lower abdomen and a transducer (a smooth hand held device) is moved gently across the abdomen.

The ultrasound examination looks at many things, including the size of the foetus, the heart rate, the anatomy or structure of the foetus (checking for normal appearance of the head, heart, abdomen, and limbs) and also the number of foetuses are present.

The NT must be measured accurately and may sometimes be difficult to obtain using a transabdominal (through the abdomen) ultrasound scan because of the position of the foetus. Sometimes a transvaginal ultrasound may need to be performed to allow this measurement to be taken. In a transvaginal ultrasound, a small specially shaped transducer is inserted into the vagina. Because the transducer is closer to the foetus it can provide clearer images. If a transvaginal ultrasound is needed, the sonographer will explain what will be done and request your permission to do so.

Risks of Procedure

For standard diagnostic ultrasounds there are no known harmful effects on humans.

It is a technique which uses sound waves to obtain an images and there is no radiation involved.

There are no known risks to the foetus.

There is similarly no risk to you or of miscarriage if a transvaginal ultrasound is performed.