

How long will the procedure take?

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

What are the potential risks?

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

It is a technique which uses sound waves to obtain pictures or 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 trans-vaginal ultrasound is performed.

Disclaimer:

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Please bring your Medicare card and any Healthcare, Pension or Concession cards if applicable.

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



Nuchal Translucency Ultrasound



Radiology Department

What is a Nuchal Translucency Ultrasound?

A Nuchal Translucency Ultrasound (or first trimester pregnancy scan) is an ultrasound used to screen for Down syndrome or other chromosomal or inherited disorders in the foetus or unborn baby.

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 test is best performed from 11 weeks and 4 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.

Before the procedure

You should have a full bladder for the exam. Empty your bladder 2 hours prior to your examination, then drink 1 litre of water 1 hour before your exam. Do not empty your bladder again.

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.

During the 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 with a sliding and rotation action.

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, spine and limbs) and also how many foetuses are present (one or more).

The NT must be measured accurately and may sometimes be difficult to obtain using a trans-abdominal (through the abdomen) ultrasound scan because of the position of the foetus. Sometimes a trans-vaginal ultrasound may need to be performed to allow this measurement to be taken. In a trans-vaginal 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 trans-vaginal ultrasound is needed, the sonographer will explain what will be done and request your permission to do so.

Image of Nuchal Ultrasound



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