

Ultrasound of the Abdomen, Kidney, Pelvis

What is an ultrasound test?

An ultrasound is test that uses sound waves instead of X-rays to look at organs inside of your body. Ultrasound can show things that an X-ray cannot.

The sound waves are sent into your body by a handheld instrument called a transducer. A gel will be used to glide the transducer on your skin. When the sound waves come in contact with an organ, the sound waves bounce back through the transducer and create an image on the ultrasound screen. A specially trained sonographer performs the test and a doctor (radiologist) will interpret the ultrasound. A report will be sent to your doctor. Using ultrasound is not harmful to you.

What can we look at with an ultrasound?

An ultrasound can be used to look at many organs or structures in the body, such as:

- Liver
- Gallbladder
- Kidneys
- Spleen
- Pancreas
- Blood vessels (such as the aorta)

Depending on your condition, your doctor may want all of these organs examined or just a few.

Getting ready for the ultrasound exam of your abdomen

- General abdomen exam: You should not eat or drink anything for at least 6 hours before your exam. You may take your medication(s) with a small amount of water. You may want to schedule your appointment in the beginning part of your day, so that most of the fasting time is during your sleeping hours. Expect the exam to last about 1 hour.

- Kidney only exam: If your doctor only wants to look at your kidneys, you may be asked to drink 20 ounces of water 1 hour before your exam time. Do not urinate until after exam. You can eat regularly.
- Abdomen and pelvis exam: If your doctor wants to look at both the abdomen and pelvis, you should not eat for 6 hours before the exam. Your doctor or whoever schedules your exam will tell you how many ounces of water to drink 1 hour before the exam. Do not urinate until after the exam.

How your exam is done

You will usually lie on your back or side during most of the exam. The gel and transducer are placed over the area that needs to be tested. The transducer will be moved about on your skin. The sonographer may need to push deeply into your abdomen with the transducer, which may cause you some discomfort or pain. You will be given breathing instructions during the exam as well. The pushing and breathing instructions may be needed to produce high-quality images.

After your exam

You may resume your normal diet unless you are fasting for another test.