

What is Ultrasound?

Ultrasound uses the same principle as sonar. Sound waves from the ultrasound probe (far beyond the range of human hearing) bounce off of the uterus, placenta, and baby making echoes which a computer converts into detailed images. In essence, an ultrasound is a series of pictures of the baby and organs in the mother's pelvis.

Is Ultrasound safe?

There has been extensive evaluation of the safety of diagnostic ultrasound. There is no documented evidence that diagnostic ultrasound causes harm to either the mother or the baby when ordinary power is used. Ultrasound exams done in our facility are done using the lowest power level that can reasonably achieve a meaningful image.

Does a normal Ultrasound prove that my baby will have no abnormalities?

Ultrasound examinations can detect many abnormalities, but some abnormalities are not detectable by ultrasound. The exam gives information about the size and shape of the bay and the baby's organs, but does not give complete information about the function of the baby's organs or tell us that the baby is completely "healthy". Abnormalities of brain function such as mental retardation cannot be detected by ultrasound exam but become apparent later in the pregnancy.

You should realize that even with a complete ultrasound exam, we may be unable to find existing fetal abnormalities that can appear later in pregnancy or after birth. Thus, although ultrasound examination is a very helpful diagnostic tool, it should not be considered absolute proof that the baby is normal.

Can Ultrasound determine if there are chromosomal abnormalities?

Findings on an ultrasound exam can be an indicator of potential chromosomal abnormalities but are not definitive. Currently the only way to assess the baby's chromosomes with certainty is to actually obtain a sample of the baby's cells by amniocentesis, chorionic villus sampling or fetal blood sampling. Some pregnancies are at increased risk for fetal chromosome abnormalities either because of the mother's age, because of results of blood screening test, or because of findings on the ultrasound exam. It is important to realize that an ultrasound exam cannot tell for certain whether the baby's chromosome count is normal or abnormal. A normal ultrasound examination does not guarantee that the chromosomes are normal.

If you have any questions concerning ultrasound, please do not hesitate to ask the ultrasound technologist or perinatologist.