

Information for women who are about to have breast ultrasound
examination (Breast Sonography)

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET
ABOUT YOUR BREAST ULTRASOUND
EXAMINATION

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About your Breast Ultrasound Exam

This information sheet aims to answer the frequently asked questions. You may have heard about Breast ultrasound examination, and you may still have some questions unanswered.

What is ultrasound?

Diagnostic ultrasound (sonography) uses sound waves that have a pitch higher than what human beings can normally hear. Sound waves are transmitted into the breast using a probe (transducer) as it scans the breast. The sound is reflected by the internal structures. The reflected echoes are received by the probe and converted by a computer electronically into an image which is seen on the monitor.



Probe (Transducer)

Is ultrasound safe?

The American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine states that so far no harmful effects have been demonstrated with clinical use of ultrasound. Although the possibility exists that biological effects may be identified in the future, current information indicates that the benefits to patients far outweigh any potential risks.

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Why do I need a breast ultrasound examination?

Ultrasound examination of the breast adds to the information obtained by clinical examination and mammography (X ray examination of the breast). The findings from breast sonography are correlated with findings from clinical examination, mammography and results from pathological examination. Breast ultrasound can identify cysts (fluid filled sacs), tumors, abscesses, lymph nodes. Needle test (fine needle aspiration), draining of a cyst or an abscess, a tissue sample (biopsy) of a suspicious area is best performed using ultrasound guidance.

Who will do the examination?

The examination is usually performed by a specially trained doctor/breast care nurse or a health care professional. Based on the images, and correlation

with clinical and mammographic findings a recommendation may be made for a biopsy or drainage procedure to be performed using ultrasound guidance.

How is breast sonography performed?

You will be asked to undress up to your waist. You will be instructed to lie on your back, or to lie on your side, or sit on an examining table. Gel will be placed on your skin and a probe (transducer) will be moved over the area to be examined. The gel may be cold. Some centres have a warmer and use warm gel, which washes easily. The room may be darkened during the examination. The examination is not painful. Needle tests performed with ultrasound guidance can be uncomfortable. The doctor may feel the area while performing the examination.

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What are the limitations of breast ultrasound?

Some of the suspicious areas seen on the mammography may not be seen on ultrasound examination. Calc like deposits which are well seen on mammography may not be seen on ultrasound. If that is the case needle tests or biopsies need to be done by other means.

Is it safe to drive after an ultrasound exam?

After the exam, you can drive home safely and eat and drink normally.